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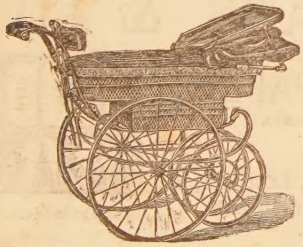

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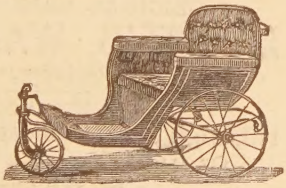

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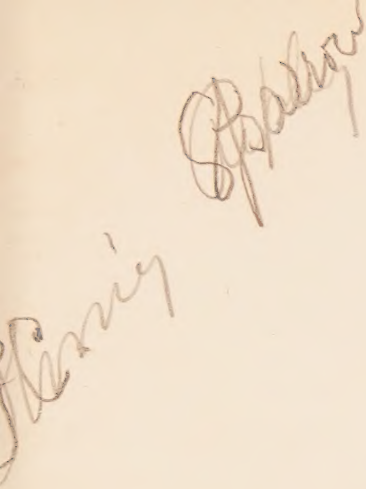

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ALL IN A GARDEN FAIR.

INTRODUCTION.

THE PRIZE OF THE GOLDEN APPLE.

If the months of the year are feminine, like the fleeting hours, then the most feminine, the most variable, the greatest coquette of the whole twelve, is that nymph whom we call May—*fol qui s'y fie*. She is inconstant; she never remains of the same mind: she is faithless; she is full of whims; sometimes she is so sweet and charming that she carries all hearts, not by savage assault, but by the mere aspect and sight of her. Sometimes she is so full of smiles and winning ways that men, looking upon each other, wonder how any could be found to speak a word in her dispraise; she sings, and laughs, and crowns herself with flowers, and trips with light foot and careless ease over meadows ankle-deep with buttercups. During these her happy moods we all fall to being happy too; every poet thinks of rhymes to fit a sonnet; every musician reaches down his fiddle; and everywhere there is such a twanging of lyres, singing of madrigals, dancing of ballads, warbling of ditties, and universal chorus of praise, that it is enough to turn the head of any goddess, to say nothing of a mere minor deity and simple country nymph. And all in a moment—lo!—she changes; she frowns: she is cold; she sings no longer; she puts on sad-coloured robes; she is as forbidding as poor Miss February with her sealskins, her red nose, her frozen toes, and the cold in her head. Alas! poor May. Then the lyre, the theorbo, the viol, the bagpipe, the serannel straw, the lute, the dulcimer, tabor, and pipe are all, with one consent, silenced and put upon the shelves; the musicians sit down, sad; the poets tear up their unfinished lays; the songs cease; everybody goes home; doors and windows are shut tight, and the poor maid is left out of doors all in the cold, deploring, alone in her gloom, to lament her caprice. Yet another hour, and she forgets her ill-humour; we forget it too: she is once more the sweet, the

lovely, the blushing, merry, and merry-making month of May; we are grovelling slaves again.

It was in the evening of, perhaps, the most lovely day that this fickle goddess ever vouchsafed to England that four children were playing together under the trees of an ancient forest. The sun was going down, and the west was already making preparations to receive him with a grand illumination. The young leaves were at their bravest and brightest, and the air was heavy with the fragrance of the May blossom, because there is no such place in the world as this forest for the hawthorn. Three of the playing children were boys of thirteen, the fourth was a girl of about eleven. She ran, and jumped, and played with the boys as if she were a boy herself, being, in fact, as strong and sturdy as any boy of her age, with a length of limb which gave goodly promise, for the future, to those who love their mistress and queen to be tall. They had been running and playing the whole afternoon and were now growing a little tired. When a boy begins to feel tired he jumps and runs harder than ever, and becomes rough, just to show that he is not tired at all. But when a girl feels tired she wants to sit down. Presently, therefore, this young lady, who had been, all day long, sunshine and mirth, grew a little cross, and began to cry fie upon the boys for their rough handling, a fault which besets and spoils their sex, and to say severely that she wished there were no such things as boys, and that they ought not to have been invented—yet conscious all the time that she preferred boys to girls as playfellows—and that she should play no longer, but should leave them to bang each other with their shoulders and their elbows. The sky, in fact, became cloudy and the wind chill.

So she walked away, dangling her hat by the strings, in the direction of a fallen trunk, on which sat a man, thoughtfully regarding the group, with his chin upon his hand, and a contemplative cigarette between his lips. He rose to meet the girl, and took both her hands in his and kissed her forehead. This was her father.

He was a little man, though his daughter looked as if she would be tall; yet not a very little man. His narrow sloping shoulders—a feature one may remark more often in Paris than in London—his small head, and the neatness of his figure made him look smaller than he was. Small Englishmen—this man was a Frenchman—are generally sturdy and broad-shouldered, and nearly always grow fat when they reach the forties. But this was a thin man. In appearance he was extremely neat; he wore a frock-coat buttoned tightly; behind it was a white waistcoat; he had a flower in his buttonhole; he wore a pink and white necktie, very striking; his shirt-front and cuffs were perfect; his boots were highly polished; he was five-and-forty, but looked thirty; his hair was quite black and curly, without

a touch of white in it; he wore a small black beard; his eyes were also black and as bright as steel. It is perhaps misleading to compare them with steel, because it is always the villain whose eye glitters like steel. Now M. Hector Philipon was not a villain at all. By no means. The light in his eyes came from the kindness of his heart, not from any villainous aims or wicked passions, and, in fact, though his beard and his hair were so very black—black of the deepest dye, such as would have graced even a wicked uncle—he frightened nobody, not even strangers. And of course everybody in those parts knew very well that he was a most harmless and amiable person. He had a voice deep and full like the voice of a church organ; honey sweet too, as well as deep. And at sight of his little girl those bright eyes became as soft as the eyes of a maiden in love. When he spoke, although his English was fluent and correct, you perceived a foreign accent. But he had been so long in the country and so far away from his own countrymen that the accent was slight. Yet he neither looked nor spoke like an Englishman.

'You are tired, Claire?'

'Not much, papa, but hot with so much running. And the boys began to push.'

She sat beside him, laying her hand upon his arm. Already they were companions, this little girl and her father. Presently there arose a great shouting of the boys; a cloud fell upon the girl's brow, because they had learned already to play *without her*, and in half a minute she was forgotten. It was a very white brow over a face which might become beautiful. As yet, no one except a prophet (of whom there are lamentably few nowadays, and those few have their hands full of other things) could say anything about the child but that she was singularly like her father, only, a very uncommon thing, she had deep blue eyes, with dark eyebrows and black hair. This combination, so far as one can learn, happens nowadays hardly anywhere except in Tasmania, where it has been accounted for on various scientific grounds, such as, that the soil is strongly impregnated with phosphate—a thing in itself quite sufficient to account for anything; and that the air is remarkably charged with ozone—what cannot ozone effect?—and that the proximity of the South Pole will account for everything not previously explained. All these reasons are excellent, and enable us to see quite satisfactorily why Tasmanian ladies get black hair and blue eyes. But they do not apply to Mademoiselle Claire, because she never was in Tasmania, and, I believe, is not likely to go there. The question why she got blue eyes and black hair may therefore be referred to the Royal Society.

She looked at them wrestling and running, just as happily without her as with her, regretfully. She had thought, perhaps, that they would follow her, and sit down on the trunk beside

her, and refuse to play any longer because she would play no longer. At least, she did not think that they would go on just as if she were not in existence. Boys are truly horrid creatures. They are born with none of the finer shades. And neglect is the greatest insult one human being can offer to another. Presently she slipped off her seat upon the trunk and opened the lid of a basket. They had been having a little inconsiderable picnic, a cheap picnic, with cold tea in a bottle, and bread and butter, and bread and honey, and a little fruit. The bottle was empty, and the bread and butter and honey were all eaten up. But there was lying, in the corner, the last of the oranges.

She took it out.

'Papa,' she said, 'shall the boys race for it?'

'They shall,' replied her father. 'We will finish with a race. Boys,' he shouted; 'we will finish with a race—Claire holds the prize. The course shall be—what? Then, mark it out for yourselves.'

He looked on with a smile, which was not the smile of benevolence, or of affection, or of good manners, or of condescension, or of interest or anticipation, because he really did not care about the excitement of the race at all, but of philosophy. He smiled, because he remarked the little coquetry of his daughter and the emulation of the boys.

As for Claire, the sunshine returned to her face, the sky was clear again, the wind was warm; the boys were going to fight for her gifts; any woman at any age appreciates this discernment of beauty. Her eyes were bright and her black locks were blown across her face. The boys meanwhile, as if a kingdom depended on the result, measured the ground, pacing side by side. When they were quite satisfied that they had got an exact two hundred yards they stood in a line waiting the signal.

'She holds,' murmured Mr. Philipon, 'the gift of the golden apple. This was long ago the cause of discord, and she is happy because she has it to bestow. Instead of three goddesses I see three schoolboys; instead of a shepherd there is a girl. Why does one think of Paris? Yet they will all grow up, and perhaps some day the golden apple will be a golden ring, and . . . . aha! Claire, my angel, thou wilt be worth many golden apples. Are you ready, brave boys? Ready all? Go!'

When he dropped his handkerchief the lads started with a rush. The biggest and tallest of them took the lead and kept it. He was closely pressed by a slighter-built boy, who promised to make a good second; long behind these two toiled the third, who was of shorter frame and ran as if he were in bad condition, panting laboriously, yet not giving in.

'Will wins,' said the philosopher. 'Happy boy! he is born to win everything. The world is his, because he is strong and brave and not too clever. Those arrive—Hein?—who are

not so much cleverer than their neighbours. To have too many ideas is to be *incompris*, uncomprehended; no one understood my ideas when I was young. The world belongs to Will. No! he loses! the boy with many thoughts wins—no—it is over—they are even. Now, in the big race which may come afterwards, to whom would the girl bestow the prize? An orange or an apple may be divided in halves, but a woman? No; she is like the Republic, One and Indivisible.'

In fact the race seemed in the first boy's hands; he was ten clear feet ahead, there were but twenty feet between him and the girl, who clapped her hands and cried out; he turned to laugh at the second; it was a sad example of pride before a fall; his foot caught in a tuft of grass and he was grassed. He was up in a moment, but he was already overlapped, and although he made up the difference, it was a dead heat, and they were in neck and neck.

The third boy continued the race long after it was hopeless, and came in with a smiling and satisfied face.

The Frenchman patted this boy on the head approvingly.

'You did well,' he said. 'Never know that you are beaten. Then you will always feel the pride of victory. My daughter, divide the prize into four portions and give Olinthus one of the quarters.'

'I was winning easily,' cried the tallest lad. He was as handsome a boy as you may wish to see anywhere, with clear, fresh complexion and brave outlook; a lad of mettle who liked fair fighting and the rigour of the game; a boy with plenty of ability, as was shown by his broad forehead and clear-cut nostril, yet perhaps without the yearning for books which makes a scholar and a writer.

'Ha! ha!' laughed the other. 'So you were, Will; I own that. All the better for me that you fell down.'

'All fair, Allen. But it is a beastly sell.'

Allen laughed again. He was a much handsomer boy, but his face wanted the strength that lay in the other's; his eyes were full and light, his lips were mobile, his forehead was high rather than broad.

Claire hesitated between the two. While she hesitated Will took the prize out of her hand.

'We will divide it,' he said, 'as your father orders. And Tommy shall have his quarter.'

'The prizes of life, my sons,' observed M. Philipon, sententiously—he really was a most profound philosopher, and so long as he could say what seemed a good thing was careless whether or no it was new—'the prizes of life are bestowed, not at random, as foolish people think, but by fixed rules; they are not given to the men who run fastest, but to those who run most wisely. Combine, Will, prudence with swiftness. Then doubt not the issue, but run with courage. As for Olinthus——'

'Tommy was out of it from the beginning,' said Will, interrupting in the truthful but brutal manner common among boys.

'If it had been a three-mile, or even a one-mile course,' said Tommy, 'you fellows would have seen—as for your little hundred-yard races, it is only a rush. Give me a long course.'

'As for Olinthus,' continued M. Philipon, 'let him continue to run bravely, short course or long course, and many prizes will be his.'

Olinthus, commonly called Tommy, blushed to the roots of his hair. Nobody noticed this proof of modesty, because his face was already so red from the running that no amount of blushes could have deepened that hue. It was a blush absolutely wasted. At a later age, when blushes are rare, this might have caused subsequent regret. Who would not wish to retain that blush which adorns the cheek of youth when good deeds come to light! Why, it is an incentive to good deeds. Titus blushed daily. But Tommy did not mind. He was, as I have said, short of figure and broad of shoulder, his legs were sturdy, his face broad and rather flat, and his nose was a little turned up at the end. Perhaps he was only a commonplace boy to look at. He who makes it the business of his pilgrimage to watch his fellow men becomes something like a portrait painter, inasmuch as he finds no one commonplace. At fourteen a face, however plain, may mean a great many things—there are infinite possibilities in every young face on which history has not yet set a mark; at five-and-twenty the number of these possibilities begins to be counted; at forty there is a stamp upon it; at sixty there is the indelible seal of a life's history upon it. Tommy's face as yet was the face of possibility, and to ordinary observers its range, so to speak, was limited. Yet you shall see to what heights this Tommy subsequently rose.

When they had eaten their orange, Claire packed up the basket, and they all began to stroll homewards. By this time the sun had disappeared and the evening was upon them.

First walked the girl between Will and Olinthus, and they all three chattered together and pretended to know everything. Boys of thirteen are encyclopædias of information; like the great mediæval scholars, they know all that there is to know; or, which is exactly the same thing, they know all that they talk about, from the hyssop to the oak, and from Bunny to Behemoth.

M. Philipon walked behind with Allen.

When the sun had quite gone down, there fell upon the forest an awful sense of the mysterious deepening twilight. The three who led the way took hands and dropped into silence; only now and then Tommy shouted, just to keep up his spirits and to show that the more awful the outward look of things, the higher his courage rose. Allen was perfectly silent, and presently his companion saw that his eyes were wide open,

luminous, gazing steadily before him, yet seeing nothing, and his lips parted. He watched the boy awhile, then spoke softly.

'Boy, shall I tell your thoughts?'

The boy started and laughed; he was called back to himself.

'If you can, sir.'

'When the sun sank behind the trees, your courage fell; you became sad: you began to long for something; you expected something. Now the wind is like a voice to you, but you do not know what it says; the trees beckon to you with long arms, but you do not know why; beneath the branches in the deep blackness are caves filled with things wonderful and mysterious; you would wish to penetrate these dark caverns and fight the devils which hide there, but you do not know how to begin, nor where to begin.'

The boy interrupted him.

'How do you know, sir?'

'Because my son, I too have been a boy. There are some boys with whom their dreams linger: mostly they die away and are forgotten. There are other boys, but not many, whose dreams take shape and live in words. Perhaps you may be one of these boys. Who knows?'

'And yet,' he said to himself, 'I suppose there will be nothing for it but the *petit commis* the little clerk. Poor boys! The pity of it!'

Part I.—THE MAKING OF A MAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE VILLAGE GREEN.

All the houses of the village stand along one side of a broad road which leads, like all other roads, to London and to Rome. It is not a high-road, and has but little traffic. It is only a road which connects one small town with another small town – Romford, in fact, with Chipping Ongar. When the road was constructed there was so much ground to spare that they did not trouble about breadth, and allowed to remain a belt of grass twenty, thirty, or forty feet wide on the side of it. The houses of the village vary in size from the great square villa set in a great square garden, to the little cottage of four rooms built of planks painted white, with a high pointed gable and porch overgrown with jessamine. Naturally, because we always have the poor with us, there are more small cottages than there are great villas. If there were any ragged children they would use the green side of the road for a playground; but there are none, for this is not a country village at all, but a suburban village. On the green, in place of the children, you may see when the day is fine certain elderly gentlemen walking together: it is their Exchange, their boulevard, their place for conversation.

One summer morning, about half-past eight or nine o'clock, there were three of these *habitués* already out upon the green.

Two of these were standing together in the shade of the tree: one, Sir Charles Withycomb, ex-Lord Mayor of London, was a little old gentleman with a short nose and white hair, a ruddy cheek and a twinkling eye, a cheerful face and a ready smile—an old gentleman who might not be very wise, but who was certainly kind of heart. The one who stood beside him was tall and thin, with a long white beard, and—which you observed when he took off his hat—a head as bald as an egg. He had a stoop in his shoulder which gave him a deferential manner, and he rubbed his hands and bowed his head when he spoke, which increased the appearance of deference to superior judgment. His name was Skantlebury. The third, Mr. Colliber, was somewhat younger, but grey-headed too. He was sharp and thin of face, with a hooked nose and the eye of a bird of prey. He lacked the kindly expression of Sir Charles, and looked angry

and hungry. This was because he was both angry and hungry. He hungered after shares, bonds, coupons, consols, funds, stocks and quotations, which had been his daily food for many years. He was angry because he could get them no more. He was as angry and as hungry as a hawk before breakfast. He was walking up and down the green looking occasionally at the Money Market article in the paper which he carried in his hand. On passing the other two he would stop and exchange a word or two.

Presently there came from one of the lanes which led into the road a very neat and dapper little man, with shiny boots, buttoned frock, and a white waistcoat. In his button-hole was a sprig of jessamine. Beside him walked a little girl of twelve or so. On passing the gentlemen he raised his hat politely. Sir Charles acknowledged the salute with a friendly gesture.

'A worthy man,' he said, 'and lives, the butcher tells me, on a pound and a half of meat or thereabouts every week, and that not the prime cut. But, to be sure, he is a Frenchman. I wonder, Skantlebury, whether the French City Companies ever have a real banquet. I remember, in my company—ah!'

There are some reminiscences better left unexpressed, because it is not in the power of words to do them justice. It is a cruel injustice that not a single poet has ever sung of a City Company's banquet. Wherefore worthy aldermen can only wag their heads and fall back upon an interjection.

Next there came running out of a cottage beside the green—one of the little white wooden cottages, with six rooms or so—a boy of thirteen or fourteen. As he passed the gentlemen he touched his hat respectfully, as a junior should. Sir Charles nodded kindly.

'A tall boy,' he said. 'Grows like his father: too much like his father. Who failed,' he added after a moment, because there was no hurry and they all knew the story, 'for a contemptible sum. Quite a contemptible sum.' He sighed and shook his head, but his face was so cheerful and his eyes so bright and his lips so red, that the butcher, looking out of his shop, thought Sir Charles was chuckling over some joke, and smiled in sympathy.

'In the silk trade, was he not?' asked Mr. Colliber, looking after him. 'There was money, once, in silk.'

'In the silk trade,' repeated Sir Charles. 'Though in a small way; and formerly in Brimage and Waring's. His partner got him into the mess. Name was Stephens, and he bolted: yes, he got hold of all the money that he could and bolted. Then Engledew failed, and—I suppose because it was such a disgraceful thing to fail for such a trifle—he—he—in fact he was ashamed of it, and he hanged himself. But the boy knows nothing of that.'

'Lucky,' said Mr. Colliber, 'that some of us weren't troubled by the same scruples. Else we might be all hanging in a row.'

'There are differences, my dear friend,' said Sir Charles

gently. 'My own failure was for a hundred and fifty thousand. Yours, Colliber, as all the world knows, for a colossal half-million. It is an event in history. It will not be forgotten. To fail for such an amount is glorious—glorious!'

His face, on which the sunshine seemed to linger, glowed with admiration at the thought of so much greatness. But Mr. Colliber only scowled, as if this greatness had been thrust upon him.

'The failures of the residents in this village,' said Mr. Skantlebury, rubbing his hands, 'amount in the aggregate, it has been computed, to more than a million and a quarter.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Colliber, with a snarl-like glimpse of white teeth; 'don't you wish you had failed yourself, Skantlebury?'

This was a cruel thing to say, because Mr. Skantlebury had, on the contrary, made money, though in quite a small way. To be almost the only man in the place who has not failed, and to have actually made a small fortune while all the rest have lost large fortunes, is a painful position for a man.

Mr. Skantlebury blushed and coughed behind his hand. The action was significant of the small way. It almost, taken with the roundness of his shoulders and the bowing of his head, suggested the retail way.

Sir Charles took no notice of this remark, and went on about the boy, although no one was listening.

'The boy's mother,' he said, was a Fool. 'Nobody but a Fool would have acted as she acted. She had some money of her own—settled upon her and all—and she positively gave it up to the creditors! A pitiable business to see so much money clean thrown away. They took most of it, and left her a poor fifteen hundred or so. They live upon it.'

'De-plorable,' said Mr. Skantlebury.

Then there passed another boy running after the first, a lad with a strap and a bundle of books.

'Young Gallaway,' said Sir Charles. 'His father died too young. If he had lived he would have failed for a far larger amount. The Gallaways have been in the oil line for many years. That boy's uncle is a warm man. Oh! yes, a warm man; I remember he lost money by me.'

Sir Charles spoke as if the more this warm man had lost by him, the warmer he had become.

At the end of the green the two boys were joined by a third, and they all set off walking together as fast as they could.

'Young Massey,' said Mr. Skantlebury.

'Another case: his father, too——' said Mr. Colliber.

'Yes, oh! yes,' replied Sir Charles. 'A creditable failure. Seventy thousand only; but the circumstances were romantic. The failure happened two years before I was Lord Mayor.'

He then proceeded to describe circumstantially the way in which Mr. Massey dissipated a good business and became a bankrupt. Unfortunately, the particulars, of the greatest in-

terest, are too long to be narrated here. It is sufficient to explain that Mr. Massey was one of those brilliant speculators who seek a fortune by shipping coals to Newcastle, sugar to Mauritius, rum to Jamaica, tea to China, or claret to Bordeaux: a man full of ideas. He tried to realise them, and the result was—that he came to the village.

'And they are pretty poor, too, I suppose?' asked Mr. Colliber.

'De-plorably,' replied Mr. Skantlebury, rubbing his hands again.

'If you want wealth,' said Sir Charles, 'you can go to Buckhurst Hill, or to Sydenham, or to Cinslehurst: here you will not find it. But we have our pride.'

One would not grudge Sir Charles Withycomb his pride, because it afforded him so much solace: but in assuming that he and his friends were singular in its possession he was wrong, because pride is one of the things to which everybody is entitled: it is a right of man; it belongs to equality and fraternity; and so benevolently equal are the distribution of the choicest gifts in store, that a City waiter may be as proud as the City Remembrancer, and the ship's carpenter as proud as the purser.

'Some of us,' Sir Charles went on, 'have received distinctions from her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen; some of us have been on terms of familiarity with the great—yes, Mr. Colliber, have lived in Kensington Palace Gardens; some of us have been in a large way; we have failed, as my friend rightly says, for an aggregate of millions. I have myself entertained his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. It was when I was Lord Mayor——'

Here Mr. Colliber moved slowly away.

'When I was Lord Mayor, Mr. Skantlebury. At the Mansion House. When he came away'—at this point of the well-known story Sir Charles's emotion always overcame him, to the absolute destruction of his aspirates, which had been acquired partially and at a comparatively late period—'when he came away his Royal 'Ighness said to me, "My Lord Mayor," he said, "I 'ope that every Lord Mayor that comes after you will entertain me as 'andsome as you 'ave entertained me 'andsome this night." He did, indeed, Mr. Skantlebury.'

'It must be a glorious recollection, Sir Charles,' said the only hearer left, 'glorious.' He rubbed his hands again and bowed his head as if he had heard the anecdote for the first time. Presently Mr. Colliber returned, and the group was joined by Mr. Massey, a large old gentleman with a rich voice and a dignified bearing, who appeared capable of failing for millions. Then they talked about investments and consulted the share lists, and were as eager over it as if they were all going off without a moment's delay to invest the money for which they had failed.

There is not much money in this village, but there is continual talk of money, and the perilous ways of merchant adventurers are familiar to the residents. There is no hurried rush to the City in the morning, nor is there the slow return in the evening; their feet tread no more the golden pavement; yet they have been there and still would go; and in their eyes it is the nearest approximation to heaven below. There was once, I have read in the 'Penny Magazine,' a sailor who was too fond of rum. Everybody in the fleet, including the Admiral, Lord Nelson, took the greatest interest in this rare and exceptional case. It was finally decided that the only way to cure the patient was to give him nothing else to drink. The first day he was in happy heaven; sang all the songs he knew, with many that he did not know; danced all the hornpipes he knew, with many steps which he only guessed; and smoked as much tobacco as can be smoked in a single day. The next morning he was no longer in heaven, but in purgatory. The next—but here we must leave him, the Admiral, Lord Nelson, and the fleet still looking on with increased interest. Now, as these gentlemen had been pursuing the shadow of wealth all the time they were in the City when they had money to play with, it was a kind of purgatory to them that they must pursue it still when they had none. People who are so unhappy or so wicked as to have actually become rich need not be considered in this story.

In fact the village reversed the proverb, because it showed how pride cometh after a fall, instead of before it. For the people who inhabited its cottages and trim villas had all, in fact, failed, wound up, made composition, or agreed with their creditors.

At first thought it seems strange that any village should be blessed with so great a distinction. Yet it is not really strange at all. For, if you think of it, every town must have some peculiarities. It may be placed on the Thames or on the Potomac; but it must be placed somewhere, else it would be worse off than a mathematical point, which at least hath position. Then it must have residents else what sort of a town would it be? And the residents must have distinguishing marks—unless they are Chinamen, who are all alike over the whole Empire. We have, for instance, all heard of the one-eyed man in the city of the blind. Abdera, again, was a city where all, from young to old, were confessedly born fools no doubt proud of their folly. Gotham (impudently annexed by the Americans) is a city, on the other hand, where they are all proud of their wisdom. Surely, therefore, there is nothing remarkable in a village—not a city, but a small village—occupied entirely by people who have broken down in the world. It would be strange, considering how many such there be, if there were no such village.

There was once an island in the neighbourhood of Byzantium whither they used to send deposed Emperors, simply dressed in monastic garb, to live the rest of their lives on beans, lentils, and cold water. I have often pictured to myself the mingled sympathy and joy with which these unfortunates would welcome a new arrival. They would hold pleasing converse with him on the glories of the throne—when they sat upon it; they would explain to him the true nobility of their own conduct, which mankind had basely misinterpreted: and they would ask of him, or exchange with him, credence as to the extraordinary purity of their own motives and the greatness of their reigns. Half a dozen of these old Emperors sitting in a row, like old sailors on the Common Hard by Portsmouth Harbour, would be a truly delightful picture. One can imagine the stories they would tell about the greatness of their fall: the consolation they would derive from the contemplation and recollection of this fall: and the flutter among the cowls when another boat was signalled having on board another deposed Emperor. Such as this island, so was this village.

As for the men in this village, the ex-bankrupts and compounders, they were, as a rule, cheerful and chirpy; they had the Green to meet in on warm and sunny days; the past was filled with pleasing memories: they would compare notes on former splendours; they would persuade themselves that they were not quite forgotten in the City yet: in fact they were not, nor will they be, forgotten for a long time. Sir Charles might still hear very very truthful things said about him; Mr. Colliber's name will still be received with the warmest blessings of those whom he has ruined, unto the third and fourth generation.

As for the ladies, the older ones found, like their husbands, consolation in memory. But it was bad for their daughters and for their sons. For lovers come not to this place; the girls—there are not many—are as perfectly sure of a loveless life as Jephthah's daughter; they go about in despondency. When one thinks about these poor girls thus hidden away and kept out of sight of marrying man, one feels first, vaguely, that something ought to be done and must be done; and secondly, that there really should be held, some two or three times in the year, a Babylonian marriage market. We have got the Babylon all ready, and really I think there would not be much difficulty in getting an auctioneer and a steady supply of lots. And, after all, such a marriage would not be much more matter of chance than plenty that are celebrated every day.

Naturally, at first, the boys grew up to regard a big bankruptcy as a just cause for pride: they considered, for instance, that Whittington came short of solid greatness by dying in good credit, and they looked upon the great offices in the City as steps in the splendour of a career which would presently end in a failure for hundreds of thousands. It was long before

Allen and Will realised that this glory existed only in the eyes of the village. The truth was rudely brought home to them by contrast and comparison. They learned when they went to school that bankruptcy means poverty. Other boys—sons of less illustrious citizens—could have new clothes, while they had to endure patches in unseemly places, lettings down, additions of cuffs, and all kinds of makeshifts to keep on the old clothes as long as they held together. Other boys, again, could have plenty of books; they had to make one set of books do between them. Some books they had to borrow. There was scrimping in such small matters as pens, ink, and paper: they could not subscribe to the school club, and were thus cut off from full companionship; and they had no pocket-money at all. Poverty is nothing so long as it is not felt; it mattered little to be poor while the boys lived at home and did not go to school, because there was at least enough to eat and to drink; it was when they were able to compare that the truth gradually became clear to them.

'It is all very well,' said Will at length, 'for a fellow to look forward to be like Sir Charles and Mr. Colliber. They failed for so much that they are grand; everybody here is proud of having been a bankrupt. But my father isn't grand at all. He says that if he hadn't failed I should have gone to Rugby and Cambridge. Very well then. What is he so proud of it for? As for me, I don't intend to fail. I mean to make a fortune.'

'So do I,' said Allen.

'So do I,' said Tommy. 'My uncle is an oil broker in a large way; he'll give me a berth to begin with. You should see his house at Brixton. I mean to make money too. You should hear him order about his butler. We had champagne there last Christmas.'

The three boys were the only boys in the place and an object of interest to the residents, who gave them advice in a paternal spirit, and sometimes, but seldom, sixpences.

'Stick to your books, boys,' said Sir Charles, stick to your books, especially your account books. They have made me, boys, what I am.' He puffed out his cheeks as he spoke, and Allen, though he regarded Sir Charles as the greatest of men, thought of the frog in the fable, while Will began to wonder whether it was the adding up of those books wrong which had made him what he was. 'They made your fathers, lads. Now which of you three is best in arithmetic?'

The other two pointed to Will, who blushed, but did not deny the accusation.

'Well,' said Sir Charles, 'I hope you are all good at figures. And what is your ambition, Will?'

'I shall try, sir, not to fail,' said the boy in his downright way.

Mr. Colliber laughed sarcastically, Sir Charles looked uncomfortable, Mr. Skamblebury coughed behind his hand.

'Ah! yes—good. And you, Olinthus?' asked Sir Charles.

'I shall try to be Lord Mayor of London, and when I fail it shall be for hundreds of thousands,' replied the ingenuous Tommy.

'A noble boy, indeed! Truly a noble boy. That is the spirit, lads, in which to enter life. Thus was England made. He patted Tommy's head and would have given him half-a-crown but that he had no half-crowns just then. 'Lord Mayor of London,' he repeated. 'Yes, that is worth aiming at. Did I ever tell you how I entertained his Royal 'Ighness the Prince of Wales?'

Had he ever told them anything else?

* * * * * * *

'When he went away, his Royal 'Ighness was good enough to say, 'My Lord Mayor, all I can say is this, "I only 'ope your Lordship's successor will entertain me as 'andsome as you 'ave entertained me 'andsome this night." That was about enough, boys, wasn't it? Eh? eh? eh?'

'Will,' said Allen, 'I hate money. They talk about nothing else. Where are the people who read books and talk about things that don't mean money?'

'I don't know,' Will answered. 'I don't hate money. With money you can buy whatever you like. The richer I get the better I shall like it. With money, Allen, you can even buy books.'

They went to an old grammar school about two miles nearer town. To get there the lads had to tramp the two miles there and back every day; they marched side by side; frequently, on Saturday afternoons especially, they would encounter other lads from Stratford, Bow, Clapton, Stepney, and Old Ford. Then there would be a fight, in which they sometimes came off victors and sometimes had to retire. Yet not ingloriously, for who could resist the ponderous charge of Will, master of an iron fist, ambidexter, the Achilles of the Forest? Beside him charged Allen, as plucky yet not so stout of build; and, outside the *mêlée*, Tommy plied the dexterous pebble. Insomuch that the prowess of the three was bruited abroad, and the chivalry of the East-end came forth. When the worsted combatants went home again they always boasted of a victory and egged their friends to go too, and try their luck. But it was observed by the thoughtful that no one went twice.

The school was an ancient foundation, and the boys were well taught. It was not wholly, for instance, a school for the training of the Perfect Clerk, which is simple, and means handwriting, spelling, and book-keeping. The Perfect Clerk needs little more. It was rather a school for the training of the

ambitious clerk who aspires to a partnership. Most of the boys' fathers were already partners, and intended that the boys should follow after them. There were many things taught in the school, and it was the fault of the masters if the *Literæ humaniores* were generally regarded by the boys as encumbrances, or perhaps useless ornaments, to their possession. The masters, for instance, knew quantities of Latin—a fact most discouraging to the student, because clearly they made no money. There was an atmosphere of the City about the school. And it was an interesting school, and had a most charming old building of red brick with ivy and picturesque masters' houses; yet it was a school from which the boys did not run away to sea, or enlist in the army, or go on the stage, or become artists, or take to letters, or try any of the fancy methods of living. They all looked forward to going into the City. The knowledge of this ought to make the fortune of the school.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOREST OF HAINAULT.

The village where these boys were brought up stands on the fringe of the old forest which once covered the whole of the north of London. It has no beauty of its own, apart from the white wooden cottages with gables and porches and garden palings all covered up and almost hidden by every kind of creeping plant, and the gracious amplitude of garden which surrounds every house big and little, so that the inhabitants may enjoy the fruits of the earth in due season. It is so near London that a boy with an imagination may at any time fancy that he can hear the bells of Bow Church—not Stratford-le-Bow Church, which is much nearer—and if he stands with his head half turned and his left hand curled round his left ear, he can easily make out what the bells say, and turn again, and become Dick Whittington, and ask Sir Charles the best way to become Lord Mayor. Yet it is so far away that London fogs fall never upon its pleasant gardens, and as for that great canopy of perpetual smoke of which we hear so much, there is not so much as the fringe of it between the children's eyes and the blue of heaven.

It is so far from London, again, as to be full of country delights, rural sounds and rural sights. The rurality of the place, to one fresh from town, seems overdone, an affectation of rurality, a pedantry and pretence, somewhat overacted, of rusticity.

Thus, nowhere are the roads more liberally edged with broad belts of grass, as if land was plentiful and cheap; nowhere

will you find such broad, ugly, uncared-for ditches, with pollard willows and old oaks beside them, blackberry bushes and brambles scrambling over them, and tall weeds, reeds, and strange wild flowers growing in them; nowhere will you find the ducks waddling by the roadside with more perfect trustfulness, as if there were no tramps or gipsies in the world; surely a duck, of all creatures, must be sincere: she would not pretend a trustfulness she did not feel. The roadside inns are picturesque and dirty; their signs—brave old signs such as the 'Good Intent' and the 'Traveller's Rest'—hang creakily over the wooden trough full of water for the horses. There is generally a horse and cart waiting; the horse drinks at the trough, the driver, leaning against a door-post of the inn with a mug of beer in his hand, drinks and exchanges opinions with the landlord; the people in the road roll as they walk, with hands in pockets, lifting feet accustomed to a clay soil—quite as if they were hundreds of miles from London; the very children roll in their walk; they roll up, ragged and brown, like the cloud rack: they are rosy and picturesque children, save when they bang and beat each other and cry with dirty knuckles in tearful eyes. The roads are quiet and there are few wayfarers. Sometimes when the weather is warm and the sun is sloping downwards you may see, leaning over the green palings of the cottage garden, the meditative maiden, looking up and down the dusty way. She waits, I suppose, for the Prince, who is to come some day and change her quiet life, and give her a high old time, a real romantic time, and make her happy ever after. The seasons and the days of these quiet girls' lives are very beautiful to contemplate and to read about—in little bits. All lives are to be taken, as the artist takes his landscapes—in bits. If you take a bit so big as to be, so to speak, a Piece, it becomes monotonous, even considered as a study of character. The girls themselves in this quiet place say that to be always studying your own character grows in the long run almost intolerable. And as for that Prince, unless he goes about on a bicycle on a Saturday afternoon, I have never met him in any of the lanes in these parts, and one fears indeed that he may not come until the spring of soft cheeks and tender eyes be gone.

In the road, besides the ditches and the belt of grass, there is pig—white pig and black pig: they lie in the warm mud happy and satisfied with life. They barrow their noses among the coarse tufts of grass in search for something toothsome, of which they know, and would tell us if they could; let us never forget, my brothers, that the pig was the original discoverer—the Columbus—of Truffleland. The expression of the intelligent and mobile tail, as its owner pokes his snout into the mud, indicates the curiosity and excitement of research, and perhaps the gratitude of success. Lastly, just to prove how deep we are in the country, the air is full of sounds absolutely rural. No-

where else so near to London can you hear such singing of birds; nowhere else so near do you get the nightingale, nowhere else so near does the dove coo. You may hear the tinkle of a sheep-bell just as if you were on Dartmoor. You may see a hawk hovering in the air as if you were on Malvern Hill. You may hear the sharpening of the scythe, the hammer of the blacksmith, and the wo-wo-ing of the ploughboy. On Sunday evening you may watch the ploughboy making love. And never an omnibus, or a tram, or the whistle of a train.

The forest, by which the village lies, was once a very magnificent and royal place indeed. It has associations of history. One of the kings was wont to hunt here, a fact which makes it interesting to everybody. Another king once rode through the forest. The old trees remember both events very well, yet attach very small importance to them, being more concerned with the recent steps taken for their own preservation. For a very remarkable custom formerly prevailed there. The people were a religious folk and anxious to live well and keep a clear conscience. Everybody will applaud them for this. And in order to make the clarity of conscience easier and safer, they took the eighth commandment out of the decalogue, and very soon forgot that it had ever existed, except when a new curate came and noticed its omission, and fumbled about and turned red, when one of the churchwardens would go and explain to him briefly, that in the spiritual interests of the parish, this excision had been found necessary. Because they gave up their whole leisure time to carving bits out of the forest and adding them to their own gardens, sticking up palings round these bits; here a cantle and there a snippet, here a slab and there a slice; a round corner and a square corner; a bare piece of turf, or a wooded clump: and all so neighbourly, encouraging each other the while with a 'Brother, will this be to your mind?' or 'Help yourself, neighbour;' and 'Let me recommend, sir, another slice;' or 'A piece of the woody part, dear friend.' The only tune which was popular in that otherwise unmusical neighbourhood was the Rogue's March, and the only articles in demand were axes to hew down the trees and wood ready cut and shaped for palings wherewithal to stake out the new property. On Sundays they knocked off work and went to church and held the plate. If a rustic lopped a branch of these stolen oaks he got six months' hard, because the inequalities of rank must be respected, and nobody can be allowed to steal anything until he has begun to pay income tax.

This was, in fact, all that was left of the great Forest of Hainault; once a vast wild wood filled with wild creatures, boar and stag, fox and wolf, marten, weasel, badger, stoat, polecat, water-rat, and squirrel. Nobody looked upon it, nobody lived in it, not even the gipsies; and as it was on no high-road, nobody ever visited it. In the good old days when the Lord

Mayor's Court used to put rogues and vagabonds, whom pillory failed to cure, outside the city walls, they came to this forest and set up in business as robbers, murderers, highwaymen, pilferers, and farm-house sneaks. Few grew fat in those trades: most were caught and hanged: the rest, less fortunate, starved when the winter came. All through the last century the great forest was a safe, commodious, and convenient rendezvous for those gentlemen of the road who took the eastern circuit. When this profession decayed, the forest was deserted indeed, save for the clipping, picking, and stealing all round its edge. Thirty years ago they resolved on destroying it altogether: in fact, they did destroy an enormous slice of it—the larger slice: they converted miles of wild forest, with rough uplands and green dales, covered with grand old trees, into a treeless tract, staked out in square fields and rectangular roads. Then they wagged their stupid heads and rubbed together their ridiculous hands and said it was a great improvement.

Yet not all; there remains a glorious fragment, so large as to be still called the Forest. And this place was the playground of the children of whom we write.

When Claire first began to run about with the boys I know not; the custom grew up by degrees; its origin is pre-historic; she was a very little girl at the time, and it continued till she became a great girl, and a maiden fully grown.

To begin with, she had no other playmates; she lived a good way from the school, where the other girls were mostly boarders. Then the forest is a safe place for children; you may climb up a tree and fall off a branch, no doubt; or a branch may be detached by an evil-minded tree and come down upon you, but very little else can happen. There are pools in the forest, but most of them are shallow; there are marshy places and quags, but a wet foot is the worst that can happen; there are gipsies, but they have ceased to steal children, and only steal linen, poultry, ducks, and sucking-pigs; and even on Sundays there are never here, as there are in Epping Forest, men who bawl, drink too much beer, laugh at nothing, carry their hats at the back of their heads, shout, and behave, as regards walking, like unto a sailor on board ship when the raging winds do blow.

Then the cottage in which Claire lived was the nearest to the forest, so that she could wait at the garden gate for the boys on their way, and be left there by them on their return.

As the children grew older they went farther afield, so that there was no part of the forest which they did not know. They belonged to the forest; when they left the houses and crossed the great meadow which stretches away from the road, and found themselves in the broad green way which, like a made road, runs here into the very heart of the forest, they were at home. The lanes which lead right and left from this green

road were known to all of them ; they are lanes of springy turf ; over them are the boughs of oak and elm and birch ; beside them, sometimes across them, are tufts or clumps or little jungles of hawthorn, honeysuckle, elder, and blackberry ; the sunlight falls on these lanes through the leaves and is always soft, and there is a continual shifting of light and shade caused by the movement of the branches. The children explored all these lanes and knew whither each one led : where the broad way of turf widened out into an amphitheatre, they made it a playing-ground, a race-course, a stage for dramatic representation ; where it narrowed again and became no wider than one of the little lanes they followed on through shade and sunshine under the branches of the old oaks till it opened again. They knew it all. It is not a very great forest : beside Fontainebleau and the forest of Eu or Chantilly, or the New Forest, or the Forest of Dean it is small ; but it is real forest, it is wild. An active lad would soon cover the whole ground. But then a forest is not a park nor is it a field ; there are endless things to explore in it ; there are creatures—wild creatures—which may be started in the underwood ; among them are the tame cats who have grown wild and now pass precarious lives in great discomfort ; in the spring and summer the air is musical with birds of which these children knew every note ; in the winter there are the donkeys who run loose and keep themselves—they will let themselves be ridden in hard times, bare backed, and never a kick, for a crust of bread ; and there are things, yea, tritons and eyvets, and wriggling things, in the pools, and jack may be caught in the river Roding ; there are butterflies and moths to be chased ; there are flowers in the spring and blackberries in the autumn. Besides the creatures and the trees and flowers there is scenery ; here and there hill-sides clothed with wood ; slopes on which, as you stand upon them and look among the trees, the sun produces strange and wonderful effects ; stretches of elastic turf ; places where the forest seems to recede and still to recede as you walk along, great trees, avenues of oaks, gatherings of beeches, with ash and elm and sycamore ; everywhere the underwood of hawthorn, honeysuckle, and wild rose ; everywhere the freshness and fragrance of the wild wood ; always light and colour even in January, when the delicate purple bloom lies upon the masses of bush and shrub and the late leaves linger on the sheltered branches, and always silence and rest from the talk of man. In such a forest the talk of money, that was too much in the ears of these boys, was forgotten ; the meanness and the poverty of their homes were forgotten ; it was a school in which the boys learned those things which cannot be written down.

It is, moreover, a forest so deserted, so forgotten, that Robinson Crusoe might live there and seldom regret his island ; no one knows of it ; no one goes there ; it leads nowhere : it is

five miles from any railway station; the children had it altogether to themselves. The rowdy and the rough know it not; there are no tea-gardens; on Sunday or on the week-day it is silent and lonely; you may dream away the livelong day alone under the old trees, as grey as those olives of Provence, which are born a hundred years old. No one ever goes to Hainault except, two or three times a year, a few school feasts; and then the children do not penetrate far into the wood; they play in the broad meadow that lies stretched out before it; and if you get to the right distance from them you may catch the sweetness of the hymns which they sing; but you must not be too near them or you will hear the Cockney twang. Why, even the guide-books do not know Hainault Forest.

To have such a place all to themselves, with such a countryside to walk in, surely compensated for poverty. Why, with a turn of the wheel they might have lived at Lancaster Gate and then they would have had nothing but Kensington Gardens. On the other hand, with another turn of the wheel they might have lived in the Mile End Road and so have had nothing at all but Stepney Green.

In long summer holidays the children could take their dinners with them and make excursions around and outside the forest. For instance, they would walk over to the school at Chigwell and thence take a path across fields to Loughton; the river Roding runs through these fields: they could fish in the Roding, which after rain is an impetuous, headlong stream, but is sluggish in fair weather. There are houses to be passed at Loughton, but beyond the houses is High Beech, and beyond High Beech stretches another forest outside the range of tramp and rowdy, and as wild almost as Hainault; beyond this comes the road, and beyond the road Copped Hall Green, an outlying bit of wild wood; and then three miles of road and then an ancient town. There is nothing in the town except the bridge over the Lea and the old Abbey Church. The Abbey buildings have long since been pulled down; the east end and chancel of the church are gone, yet what remains is stately; and it is surrounded by a churchyard in which stands an old, old tree, bound about with iron bands and provided with a bench on which should be sitting none but old men, contemplating with faith and resignation the place where they soon must lie. To one of these boys, if he went there alone and sat long enough, there presently came a vision. He saw a fierce battle, with men in armour, and armed with cross-bow, long-bow, pike, lance, and heavy sword. There was a great shouting and clashing of weapons; there was the heavy tramp of chargers carrying knights in iron armour; there was the rushing to and fro of men who charged and men who fled; there was the hurtling of bolts and arrows in the air; there was a flight and a slaughter. It was the vision of Senlac Fight which came to the boy, because

somewhere at his feet there lay the bones of King Harold and his brothers.

Or, there is another field-path which takes you to Buckhurst Hill, where there are more houses; but you can soon get through these and then you are in the forest again, where there are avenues of oaks. When you get through these you are only a mile or so from an ancient deserted church. It is empty now and dismantled; its windows are broken, its roof is gaping, it is covered all over roof and walls with the ivy of five hundred years. A place hallowed by the joys of love and marriage, the hopes of childhood, the prayers of life, the tears of death, through all these generations. Those who have lived and loved, rejoiced and wept, lie now around their ruined church; their forgotten dust, and the very oblivion of their lives and their hopes consecrate the place. It is by such things, far more than by the formal footstep and perambulation of the bishop, that a churchyard is set apart and hallowed.

Or, again, there is another way beyond the forest which leads along narrow leafy lanes, the like of which you cannot find outside of Devonshire. You pass by the way a place at which the children always stopped to look over crumbling old wooden palings into a strange deserted graveyard. There is no church or chapel in it or sign of any building; it is a small square covered with graves, and containing one or two headstones; trees stand round it, and it is covered with long grass; a wild and ghostly place. A mile or so farther you come to a little old town; a town of which nobody ever heard, whither nobody goes; a town of red-brick gabled houses with red-tiled roofs standing all huddled together in a circle, as if there were once walls round it; a strangely quiet town, which looks as if it had never even heard of the outer world, and took no interest in anything but itself, but proposed to go on in this retired fashion, as secure and happy and peaceful as the city of Laish.

A child who is brought up beside the sea learns daily lessons in the vastness and illimitable variety of the world. He sees the stately ships go by; he watches the waves and gathers the shells; his mind may become full of great thoughts; it cannot learn from the sea any thoughts that are small and mean. A child brought up in the monotony of endless streets must get great and noble thoughts in spite of the houses standing innumerable, row after row, line upon line; there is no education for such a child outside its home. A boy born on the steppes of Central Asia is not so badly off, because there are quantities of things to watch and wonder at on the steppe—snakes, wolves, bears, Kurd and Cossack, Turcoman and Tartar. But a child brought up in a forest learns, besides the manners and customs of trees, the underwood, the flowers, the grass, and the forest creatures; besides the beauty of the open glades and hanging woods and tangled branches overhead; the cheerfulness of

nature, the joy of every living thing, and the freedom which makes that joy possible for humanity.

This forest playfield, these wanderings in the free and open woodlands, among green glades and wild woods, affected the boys in a different way. For one, they strengthened brain and nerve and eye; they made him strong of limb, stout of heart, and keen to see things as they are. As regards the second, the forest filled his imagination and gave him food for the vague, delightful dreams which haunted him day and night.

There was the third boy. But he very soon dropped out from among them and longed for the city pavement. He sat at home, where he ruled over his mother and sisters and read tales of fashionable life, and wondered how soon it would be before he, too, might smoke cigarettes with reckless baronets, and listen to the popping of champagne corks and sit up gambling till they were all knee deep in cards.

But Claire went with the other two when she was a little girl and it was delight enough to run and jump; when she was older and could learn with them the secrets of the forest; and when she was so old that she could think and wonder and ask herself, in vague and girlish way, what life had yet to give.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THERE IS OUTSIDE.

'They will be nothing after all,' said Hector Philipon, looking at the boys at play, 'but little clerks *petits commis*. Poor little chaps! that must be their fate.' He rolled another cigarette and began to reflect upon the various conditions of mankind, and especially on clerkery.

He knew the *petit commis* of Paris, and he rashly concluded that he of London resembled him, not knowing that in clerkery, as in the Church or the law, or any other calling, there are degrees, grades, depths, and heights. He thought that all alike were hopeless. Their labour, he argued from these unsound premises, is not skilled; they have no skill or craft; they can write, spell, read, cast accounts; they are worth in the market from fifteen to eighteen shillings a week; and though many arrive at two, three, or even four pounds a week, that is only by the generosity and pity of their employers, a race of men who are always confounding social economists and breaking the rules of the most lovely theory. These people, he ignorantly thought, must be miserable, because they have no pride in their work; because their work is monotonous, and the same from youth to age; because there are no prizes for them; because there is no dignity in their lives; because they must always remain ser-

vants; because they must pretend to be gentlemen; because they have no holidays, except one week in the year; because of necessity they must live amidst mean and monotonous surroundings.

This class of humanity did not seem, to this philosopher, even interesting: a Frenchman is never moved by a thing which is not dramatic: and it is difficult to dramatise that kind of sorrow which comes of pinching; one feels little sympathy with a man who seldom starves yet is always kept low; who is pinched all round, in his pay and in his work; in his education and his knowledge; in his ideas and his hopes; in his art—here he is not pinched but deprived and robbed; in his religion, which requires a whole chapter of explanation; in his morals, to explain which requires a visit to the nearest music-hall; in his home, which is all pinching and pricking; in his joys, which are of the saddest. Yet this uninteresting person, if he exists, needs a great deal of pity.

He does exist, though M. Philipon ignorantly exaggerated his numbers: the hopeless clerk is found in every city. He is in London as well as in Paris, and wherever he is found he is always the same helpless, ignorant, hopeless log.

Now two, at least, of these three boys were from the beginning, as it seemed to their honest friend, destined to live the life of the hopeless clerk. Their parents were too poor to keep them at school after fourteen or fifteen, or to teach them anything beyond the ordinary school course. They had no friends, no influence, no money, and, which was worse, they had no idea that life outside the city was even possible for any boys. It was, therefore, fortunate that they were 'found out' by Hector Philipon. In the eyes of the village M. Philipon was nothing but a very polite and well-dressed little Frenchman, who held a post generally supposed to belong to the most harmless and the meekest of mankind; those who, like hair-dressers, drapers' assistants, waiters, vergers, have not so much as a single kick in all their profession. He was teacher of French in a large girls' school. Meekness and harmlessness were professional attributes. It was known, besides, that his butcher's bill was ridiculously small, and this was taken as in itself a proof of meekness. None of the girls had ever seen him out of temper, though he was continually tempted to commit child-murder. This was another proof of meekness. He was also reported to follow the pursuit of gardening during his leisure moments, and this was another proof of meekness, if any more were wanted. Lastly, he had never been in business, and had therefore never failed. This was contemptible. He lived in a very little cottage of six small rooms, standing on the skirts of the forest, and surrounded by green wooden palings; beyond the palings you saw the old trees. The cottage was built of the old, not the new, warm red brick, and possessed a broad wooden porch with a bench on either side. One could sit in the porch

in almost all weathers. A wistaria climbed up on one side and a jessamine on the other; round and about the house there were honeysuckle, hawthorn, lilac, laburnum, and roses—roses yellow, roses red, roses white, roses of all kinds; in the front a dainty flower garden; at the back a large vegetable and fruit garden. The harmless, polite little man could be seen on half-holidays, early in the morning, late in the evening, dressed in a blue blouse, at work among his flowers and his cabbages. He was a model teacher of French for young ladies, and he had but one fault, that he did not go to church. But then a French master is always allowed to be a Roman Catholic, and there was no Catholic church in the place. He was ignorantly supposed to say mass, all by himself, alone. Harmless! And yet he was the only man in all that village who had ideas! The only man who knew his fellow-men, and they thought him harmless! If I were a lady, and, if in addition to this transformation, I were to become a lady who 'bossed' a girl's school, I should not choose for my French master one whose favourite reading was Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and such revolutionary writers of the last century; nor should I feel comfortable if I knew that a red republican was turned loose among my innocent flock; nor should I keep a bit longer than I could help a man who every day, in the privacy of his home, propounded maxims and gave utterance to thoughts and sentiments of the most dangerous character. You shall see how harmless he was.

M. Philipon, while the boys were young, was unhappy because he had no one to talk to except his little daughter. At the school he would talk to the girls in French, but he hated the girls. Yes; had Miss Billingsworth known it! He hated the girls and he detested the grammar of his own language, and he was alone and could not express his sentiments. Fortunately he began to talk to the boys who played in the forest with his Claire, and before long he made the discovery that two of them, at least, were boys with heads upon their shoulders. Then he began, partly because he had nothing to think about, to watch them and to listen to their talk while they played, because it is the talk of a boy at play which reveals the character of that boy, and he made an observation about certain differences between them. This was that one of the boys was always wanting to sit by himself and read, and always ready to borrow any book he could get and go away to secluded spots in order to read his book; further, that another was always interested in hearing the contents of that book without desiring to read it for himself, and that the third neither read nor listened, and was not athirst for information. Now boys are like sheep in this respect, that no two boys are alike. But it requires observation to discover the differences between them. Therefore M. Philipon began to consider these boys more carefully, and he became interested in them. And by conversation and observa-

tion he was made aware that they were desperately poor and would be sent into the city as soon as they could be taken away from school. He thought of the *petit commis* of Paris, and his soul was sad for the future of the two boys, bright and brave, and born for better things. Yet what help? 'What can we do, Claire?' he asked his daughter. 'What can we do to help your friends?'

'Will has got a prize for arithmetic, and Allen for Latin, and Tommy for writing,' said Claire, implying that they wanted no help.

'That is well; yet, my child, the ignorance of all three is profound: it is phenomenal. To be sure, you are as ignorant as the boys. That matters less. None of you, I believe, know that there are a great many people outside the City of London.'

'Oh! papa. Why, we all learn geography. I am in Asia already. Of course we all know that.'

'Claire, my dear, sit here at my feet and listen.' They were in the garden alone on a sunny afternoon. 'You are a very little girl yet, but you are thoughtful. Consider what I say. Boys who learn nothing know nothing. Boys who know nothing and have no money have no chance. Boys who have no chance become *petits commis*—little clerks. These are the *misérables* who spend their lives copying at a desk; do you wish your friends to be copying machines?'

'No, no. But Allen and Will could never be that.'

'They must be that, my child, unless we help—you and I together.'

'Why, what can I do, papa?'

'You must become suddenly five or six years older. You must try to understand what I am doing and why. Now listen. The only thing that can help these boys is knowledge. They must know more than their competitors. What they learn at school will not help them much. I shall try to teach them the things that will be useful. Do you understand me?'

'Yes, papa.'

'Good. In order to do this I must make them eager to learn; you must help me by being yourself more eager to learn than to play.'

Her face fell a little. She would certainly rather play.

'It is for the boys' sake, my daughter.'

She hesitated no longer.

'I will be eager to learn, papa.'

'Good girl! I will reward you by telling you more. While they are learning they shall think that they are playing; only you and I will know that they are teaching themselves useful things. All the time I shall be putting things into their heads and making them ambitious. And you shall have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to make men instead of machines. You may even, if you please, tell the boys.'

'The boy,' he went on, 'who knows nothing, is dangerous; he has power and does not understand how to use it; he is an elector, perhaps, even, an elected; he is like a loaded gun in the hands of a monkey. Stupidity is only safe when it is blind, deaf, and sleepy. When it wakes up it is mad. Let us prevent the boys from being stupid.'

The Frenchman proceeded to act. He put on his best coat, and a fresh flower in his button-hole, assumed his most diplomatic manner, and made three calls in the village. First he called upon Mr. Massey, and next upon Mrs. Engledew. To each he pointed out the importance to a young man entering the City of one foreign language at least, and he offered to teach the boys his own gratuitously. The offer was accepted promptly and with grateful surprise. For to find a man ready to give his services for nothing is a thing quite out of the common.

'I have always said,' remarked Sir Charles when he heard of it, 'that Monsieur Philipon was a harmless, good enough sort of person. For nothing, did you say, Massey? Dear me! In the City, now, we know better.'

'We do, indeed, Sir Charles,' said Mr. Skantlebury. It is difficult to see what services a man can render his brother man for nothing in the City, unless he gives him cargoes for nothing.'

'The man is a foreigner,' said Mr. Colliber. 'I've always thought that another name for Tom Fool.'

'But if he teaches the boy French'—observed Mr. Massey, with a little doubt.

'Take his offer, Massey,' said Mr. Colliber. 'Take all you can get for nothing.'

Hector also made the same offer to Mrs. Gallaway, but it was declined because the ruler of the house said that his uncle, who had the great house at Brixton, and was in a Large Way in Oil, had got on without French, and so could he.

The lessons were not at all what the boys expected. They looked forward with little eagerness to learning grammar and writing exercises. They found no grammar at all, and no exercises. On the contrary, the lamp was lit in the sitting-room; there were two or three books on the table. Their teacher welcomed them in French, and then informed them in English that for the future no word of their own language was to be spoken in his presence. The boys looked at each other in dismay. Why, he was always with them. Not a word of English? Were, then, their very sports in the forest to be conducted, so to speak, in French? Then M. Philipon rolled a cigarette, lit it, and began to talk to Claire. Then Claire began to talk to the boys, but they understood not one word. Then she read to her father, and presently handed them the book, but they could not read a word.

When they went home they felt inclined to cry, and

wondered whether it was possible for two boys to look more profoundly foolish.

The next evening Claire met them at the garden gate and told them a few French phrases, and the names of things about them, and what she was going to talk about with her father. Accordingly, when the lesson began, they knew what was meant, and she went round the room giving names to the things. Then they began to find French names for everything; as they played in the forest; as they walked to school and back; whenever they were with Claire. Remark, that the first thing you want in a language is the vocabulary; men who learn many languages begin after the manner of Adam, with the names, not after the manner of the schoolmaster, with the syntax. Those who do not want to learn a language begin with grammar and exercises; this is the way of our schools, and it is the cause of our brilliant success in modern languages. Next, they learned, chiefly by Claire's help, how to connect the names with verbs and adjectives and things of that sort; and they perceived that a certain amount of grammar was necessary, which M. Philipon was so good as to put into their heads; but there was no regular teaching; he sat and listened while they talked and read. One may remark that if he had adopted the method at his school, the girls would have really learned French; but he was expected to follow the lines to which his employer was accustomed. That is to say, he read Racine with the girls and made them write exercises on the experiences of the watchmaker's aunt and the gardener's grandfather. Therefore, the girls did not learn French at all and the boys did, though they wrote no exercises at all and knew nothing about the gardener's grandfather. The difference was that Miss Billingsworth bought a machine warranted to grind in one way only, and that the boys got a man's brains given to their service and always thinking what would be best for them.

When their ears had caught the sound of the French language, when they had learned a copious vocabulary and could read with pleasure and talk freely, though still with plenty of mistakes, their teacher set them to write; they read a story one evening and wrote it down the next; then they compared what they had written with what they had read and were put to shame. It was necessary to find out many more things in the grammar; they found these out.

Hector Philipon, in fact, was a man of ideas and of clear mind. He wanted the boys to learn, not to pretend. He therefore made them teach themselves by an intelligent process, while he taught his girls by the conventional process. In two years they really knew French. Hector, by this most precious gift, lifted them by one step out of the lower levels of clerkery; their commercial value was doubled.

One does not talk every evening with a man who has read,

and can think, and has acted among his fellow-men, without results. First of all, the boys read quantities of books, lively travels, in which the writers, being Frenchmen, looked out perpetually for dramatic situations; biographies, also written by Frenchmen, and therefore compiled with a view to *tableaux*; history, which is full of splendid scenes; and tales, especially the tales of Erckmann-Chatrian. Next, they learned that there are other forms of life besides business life in the City; this was an immense stride in knowledge; and other occupations besides making money by buying cheap and selling dear, and other men and women besides the people of the City. They got all kinds of ideas, with vague ambitions; they forgot their poverty and the very small and humble *début* into life which was before them; their hearts glowed in thinking of the great deeds of the men who had gone before them, and the splendid things which they, too, would achieve. In the course of time there grew up in both the boys a dim and shadowy vision of a great and wonderful future opening out for all the world; what it was they did not know, nor did they inquire; nor did they realise that the thing had been suggested by their instructor. All that they understood as yet was, that some time or other the wars and battles would come to an end because there would be nothing left to fight for; that the history of the world is a history of people fighting for justice; that they would at last, somehow, arrive at justice; and that this would so far extend the general stock of happiness that there would be enough to go round and to spare. Was not this a great and suggestive lesson for the boys to learn?

Oh! harmless M. Philipon! Oh! unsuspecting village! Oh! condescension and patronage! For here were two boys, with strong brains and stout arms, already full of ideas and athirst for knowledge, and here was a crafty teacher of girls—nothing more than that—leading them on, step by step, into ways of thought, which gentlemen who had failed for an aggregate of a million and a quarter could not contemplate without horror.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW SHAME.

The time came when they must leave school and begin work. They were now fifteen years of age, and tall lads, who might have passed for seventeen. There is a House in the City—Brimage and Waring's—whose offices are situated in the square of Great St. Simon Apostle, where there is the Dutch Church, and at the London and the St. Katherine Docks. It is a House in the silk trade, which has a long and splendid history, and

employs an immense quantity of clerks, workmen, porters, carters, and people of all kinds: and it has branches and agencies in the far East, and in France. The grey-headed men who draw large salaries, or have a share in the profits, have been in the House since they were boys. They entered as clerks, ambitious rising clerks. There are, also, grey-headed men who entered with them as clerks, without ambition, hopeless clerks, who began to copy letters and add up, and are doing the same thing still, and draw, some of them, as much as two hundred pounds a year, and live at Stepney, or Pentonville, or, it may be, happy Hoxton. Allen's father began as an ambitious clerk in this House, but he went out of it and set up for himself, as do most ambitious clerks who love to be their own masters.

It was natural, therefore, that Allen's mother should apply to the partners of this House in her son's behalf. They promised to receive him, and they informed the widow that the boy should be favourably looked after.

By good fortune, Will also got into the same Firm at the same time, so that the two boys, who had so long trudged together backwards and forwards to school, now went to the City and back by the same train, sat beside each other at the same desk, and took their dinners together for ninepence at the same luncheon-bar.

As for Tommy, he was, of course, taken into his uncle's office.

But on the evening before Allen's duties began, his mother begged him to stay at home with her. She had something to tell him. She was a woman born to be comely, smiling, and contented, but fate had been against her. The memory of past misfortune and the pinch of present poverty had taken the sunshine out of her face, which was generally hard, except when her eyes fell upon the boy. For in him was her only hope. A daughter of the City, too, who knew of no other life for a man than to go off 'to business' every morning, and to make himself a position. What her husband had tried to do, her son would succeed in doing.

The thing she had to tell was so dreadful that, when she began to tell it, she fell into passionate sobbing and crying, such as Allen had never seen before.

'Why, mother,' he said, 'if it distresses you, do not tell me.'

'It is about your father,' she cried. 'Oh! Allen—Allen—I must tell you about your father at last.'

'But I know, mother, without your telling. He failed in business, and he died, and we have been very poor ever since. You see, I know. But never mind, I will make you rich again.'

'No!' she said, bursting into fresh tears. 'There is a great deal more. The worst remains to be told. Listen, Allen. He had a partner—a man named Stephens—Engledew and Stephens was the Firm, with offices in Laburnum Court, Threadneedle Street. I knew John Stephens before I knew

your father. Yes; I knew John when we were boy and girl together, and before he became a bad man. Sometimes I think that he did it out of revenge when he did it, because he asked me once to marry him, and I refused. But he went on being friendly, and I never suspected—never. A bad man—a bad man.'

She paused and wiped her eyes.

'Remember, Allen, always remember, that there never was any one like your father for honour and rectitude, which made it all the worse. And his only fault was that he believed other people to be as honourable as himself. As for his partner, he trusted him entirely; whatever Stephens told him he believed. And, oh! the things which that man told him.'

'Go on, mother,' said Allen gravely.

'My dear, I have always intended to tell you about the wickedness of this man as a warning to you. But I cannot. You must guess his wickedness when you hear about other men, as you grow older. Whatever you hear of treachery and lies and wicked profligacy, remember that Stephens, your father's partner, was worse. I think there never was, since the world began, a man so horribly—so incredibly wicked.' The poor woman's experience of vice was, to be sure, confined to this one example, so that possibly there was some exaggeration. But Allen was not in a critical mood. He perceived that something had to be told him, much more painful than anything that had gone before. 'One day,' his mother continued, 'your father did not come home at his usual time. I waited for him till past nine o'clock. Then I was frightened, and I put on my things and took an omnibus to town to see if anything had happened. It was ten o'clock when I got to the City, and all the offices were closed, and the streets empty. But in my husband's office the gas was burning, the door was unlocked, and I found him—oh! my dear husband! oh! my poor husband!—sitting at his table with papers before him, and on his white face, as he lifted it when I opened the door, I saw despair.'

She hid her face in her hands. The tears ran down Allen's face, but he said nothing. What word of comfort could the boy find to say?

'Without a word of warning, Allen, the blow had fallen. Stephens had run away, leaving a letter in which he confessed all. Your father was ruined.'

'What had he—Stephens—done, mother?'

'I do not know. That is, I knew once, because they told me. But I have forgotten, I know no longer. He had robbed all the money, he had borrowed more in the name of the Firm; everything was gone, credit as well as money. Your father's good name was gone; no one, he said, would ever believe that he knew nothing of the frauds—think of the word fraud—the frauds perpetrated by his partner; ruin and disgrace were before him, very likely: most likely, he said, a criminal prosecution

and a prison. Think of that, Allen. Oh! boy, you have wondered why your mother never laughed; she can never laugh again because of that night. All these things he told me in a quiet, cold way, without any anger or any hope, so that I knew his heart was quite broken. Presently, it was then half-past eleven, he kissed me—oh! God of mercy, it was the last kiss he would ever give me, my dear—my good—my noble husband—and he bade me leave him, because he had much to do, and I must go home and think of the child. Who was I that I should disobey him at such a moment? I left him, my dear. Oh! I left him. I went home and I waited all night long beside your cradle, but he did not come home all night long—what a night!' She stopped with a kind of spasm.

Allen sprang to his feet and began to walk up and down the room.

'Mother! go on. Tell me all.'

'He never came home any more. They brought me a letter in the morning. He said that he could have borne poverty with me, but not shame. He could see no way of escape, he could find no means of proving that he knew nothing of the frauds which had been committed by his partner in his name. That he had written to everybody concerned stating the truth, and that as Heaven had taken from him what was dearer than life, he would give up that too, and he prayed that it might be forgiven him, and that God's blessing would rest upon us, his wife and innocent boy. And then—Allen—Allen—he destroyed himself.'

She was silent. She had told all there was to tell.

'Now you know, poor boy. It will not make you happier to know it. At the office where you go to-morrow everybody knows. Sir Charles knows about it. I suppose that all the village knows.'

'Everybody, except me,' said Allen bitterly.

'And now you too know. But, Allen, there was a meeting of the creditors, and—and—the people who had been robbed. And they passed a resolution that they believed Mr. Engledew was free from any guilty knowledge in his partner's frauds. And they offered a reward for John Stephens's apprehension.'

'And did they catch him?'

'No! he was never heard of afterwards. We may suppose that he is dead. Something dreadful is sure to have happened to such a man. I hope,' she added then, with a little hesitation, as if she was not quite satisfied with the honesty of her wish, 'I hope that he repented before he died. But, no doubt,' she cheered up a little, 'he died unrepentant and went to his own place.'

Allen threw his arms about his mother's neck and kissed her. Then he went out, put on his hat, and made for the forest. The evening was warm and light. As he passed the cottage he saw Claire in the garden alone. Her father, as usual, was hunting the common slug among the lettuces.

'Claire,' he whispered, 'come with me.'

She ran out and took his hand. They ran together across the meadow beyond which the forest begins. When they came to the trees and were hidden among the branches, Allen stopped.

'Oh, Claire,' he cried, but his voice failed, and he burst into cries and tears.

'Allen, what is it? You are going into the City to-morrow to make your fortune, and you are not happy? Will was with us half an hour ago. He was full of delight.'

'Claire, I want the earth to open and swallow me,' said Allen. 'I wish I had never been born. I wish I was dead.'

'Please, Allen, tell me why.'

He told her, in as few words as he could find, the substance of his mother's story.

'To-morrow,' he said, 'I have to go into the City and into the office where they all know me. They will say, "Is this the son of the man who was bankrupt, and who, because he might have been accused of dreadful things, killed himself?"'

'Poor Allen!' The girl was only thirteen years old, but she knew already the simple arts by which women become ministering angels. 'Poor Allen! Do you think that any of the three or four who know will care to speak or to think of such a thing? As if it was your father's fault! As if it was your fault! You may be proud of your father, Allen, not ashamed. I have heard Sir Charles say that there was no more honourable man in the City of London. Allen, dear, don't cry, I have known—why, we have all known this all along, but no one thinks the worse of you for it. How can they? Come, let us go back to my father. Tell him that you are going into the City to-morrow for the first time—to make your fortune.'

'I hate the City,' cried the boy passionately. 'It has robbed my father of his fortune and his good name; it has robbed my mother of her happiness; what will it take from me?'

'Come, Allen,' said Claire, 'come to my father: he will comfort you.'

Despite the philosopher's consolations, it was with downcast eyes and shameful heart that Allen went into the City for the first time, while Will looked as if he, for his part, must dance and sing for joy that the time for action had arrived.

'Remember, Allen,' he said in the train, 'they think that we are just a couple of boys from school who know nothing but to copy letters. Wait a bit. They will find us out after a time, and then we shall make our way. Don't be afraid, old boy.'

All day long Allen went about his work expecting to hear some allusions to his father's fall and suicide. Yet no one said anything about it, for the simple reason that the whole thing was forgotten, save by one or two. This forgetting of things is a natural event which people concerned in events which should

be forgotten do not consider or expect. I met the other day a clergyman whom I had not seen since old days at Cambridge. He accosted me with something like a maidenly blush, saying, 'They acknowledged afterwards that it was all my handwriting.' For some time I could not understand what he meant. Then I remembered that he had been plucked for Classical Honours. It was twenty years ago, but the sight of me recalled the old shame, and he still imagined that everybody was talking of it. This was exactly the case with Allen Engledew. Nobody cared any longer to remember the misfortunes of his father. They were buried, and will only be exhumed again when, if ever, Allen is talked about for other things—if, for instance, he should write a successful book—and then men will rake up the story and quote it in order to reduce by a measurable quantity the greatness of the new man. Who on earth cares about the father of a boy clerk, and whether he shot himself or hanged himself or disposed of himself in any other fashion?

'What is it, Allen?' asked Will, when they were coming home. 'Why have you been looking so blue all day? I call it jolly. Why, we are at work at last. Don't you like the look-out? I think it is splendid. Once we get our chance we shall go ahead. Did you see the old gentleman who got down from his carriage? That is the senior partner. He has got a town house at a place called Lancaster Gate, and a country house in Hampshire, and he's a Member of Parliament. We shall have our carriages and be Members of Parliament too But what's the matter, Allen?'

He saw Allen's eyes were flooded, and he was fain to hide his tears in the old schoolboy fashion—with his knuckles.

'Tell me, Will,' he said 'do you know—did any one ever tell you, how my father died?'

'Poor old boy,' said Will, 'you are thinking of that.'

'I only heard last night. My mother told me.'

'Why, Allen, it was nearly fifteen years ago. Think no more about it. Of course we know. It was his partner's fault. Everybody knows that. Cheer up, old chap. Let's go and tell Claire about the City. You shall tell her about the golden pavement—that's all in your line—and I'll tell her about the turtle soup we had for dinner, all for ninepence, eh? at a luncheon-bar, after we'd danced on the pavement and filled our pockets with nuggets. That's in my line. Hooray! Who wouldn't be in Brimage and Waring's? What a lucky pair we are! I say, Allen, partners always, man; no quarrelling between us two. We're brothers, we are. You and I will go up the ladder together. Don't you feel as if you were quite ready for the second rung?'

They shook hands and Allen cheered up.

'And Tommy?' he asked.

'Tommy shall be only a first cousin,' replied Will.

CHAPTER V.

THE CONFESSIONS OF A PHILOSOPHER.

They still spent their evenings at the cottage, and they still continued their readings. But the schoolboy days were past; their guide began to put serious books into their hands. His library was not large, but he could borrow of a compatriot, a bookseller in Soho. He therefore introduced the boys to such writers as Chateaubriand, Prosper Mérimée, Alexis de Tocqueville, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Alfred de Musset, Béranger, and he made certain sparing use of the older writers, such as Montaigne, Rabelais, Molière, Marot, and the great tragedians. The boys read these works before they read any English literature at all. They knew, which is strange, Béranger before they knew Shakespeare, and Victor Hugo before Milton. They did a great deal of massive reading in those years, and acquired a vast quantity of ideas.

When the boys got promotion, which came in due course, and when it was found that they knew French and could write it, and were consequently rewarded with salaries which gave them money to spend, Allen began to buy books. Every boy who loves reading knows the joy of seeing his shelf fill up and overflow into other shelves, until a whole bookcase is filled up —yea, even a whole house, a house of the largest size. And then he began to plough his delightful way through the English poets. Yet the interruption to reading caused by the eight hours of work at his desk was very grievous to him. And he made no friends among his fellow clerks.

'Out of the boy who is always reading,' said Hector to himself, 'comes, if he is properly looked after, the man who writes.'

He watched the boy more carefully. He saw that Allen now neglected his French books and read nothing but English, and principally English poetry.

He observed that the boy would go away by himself into the forest, book in hand. He followed him and saw him, alone as he thought, reading aloud and declaiming. He began to wonder what, if anything, would come of it. And he congratulated himself on his own teaching, because in one thing he was successful—he had made both boys ambitious.

If you consider, you will find that every Frenchman knows, what few Englishmen ever learn, that what one man has done another can do. He therefore respects himself as much as he respects the great men of history. The magnanimity of Scipio, the heroism of Horatius, the wisdom of Cato, the eloquence of Demosthenes, the genius of Hannibal—all these qualities may,

he thinks, be united in himself. These boys had learned the same lesson. They believed in themselves.

The time passed by. While it improved the appearance of the young, it played tricks, as usual, with the middle-aged. Time did not knock out Hector's teeth, nor make him bald, nor did it cripple his legs, nor did it put chalk stones in his knuckles, as he does to some unfortunates; but it turned his once black hair into a creamy white, beard and all, which made him resemble one of the Seven Sages, but I do not know which. They all had white hair, white beards, and bright eyes; they also had, I am sure, deep and sweet voices like this man, their successor.

Time, also, made Will a great strong fellow of six feet, with broad shoulders and sturdy limbs, as comely a lad as one may look to see anywhere. Allen was of slighter build, and he had already at eighteen acquired the stoop of those who read. His features were regular, his eyes full and lustrous. With a young man's regard for appearance he carried an eye-glass, but in his pocket lay the glasses with which he read and wrote.

On Will's face was written the brave resolve to succeed; on Allen's a curious, triumphant look, as of one who has already succeeded. Will's face was generally grave, because, though many resolve to succeed, few carry out that resolution. Many long to travel on the same road as Dick Whittington, but cannot find their way. Yet the air of London is charged with the stories of those who have succeeded: the pavement is worn with the steps of those who have succeeded. He would get on somehow. He must find out the way sometime.

Allen never felt any doubt or despondency at all. He held his head high, as one who has already succeeded; his eyes were triumphant; he was a young conqueror, because in imagination he had already succeeded, and because the success of which he dreamed can be won at a single bound, and because it is success in a line in which there are not many rivals, and because it is success of a kind not desired by the practical.

We have not forgotten Olinthus. He had long since left them, yet he lived in the village and was still one of them. His future looked bright; his uncle had already promoted him to a place of some trust; he thought the way was clear before him. In person he had not attained quite to the proportions of Apollo, his lines being laid for strength rather than for grace. Compared with the other two he was like a Portsmouth wherry laid up in Haslar Creek beside a racing yacht; he was short and thickset. In order to prevent him from repining, and by way of compensation—kind Nature is always dealing out compensation and making up for things—he was endowed at the outset with an excellent opinion of his own beauty, abilities, and attractions. He 'fancied himself' as much as Narcissus, and had there been anywhere in the Forest a clear fountain, I am satis

fied that he would have imitated that self-conscious shepherd, perhaps to his own undoing. Besides this, he was a young man possessed of great good-humour and natural amiability. These excellent qualities shone, visible to all observers, on his large, round, shiny face, wreathed in perpetual smiles. Few things conduce to make a man uniformly cheerful more than a good opinion of himself. Wives should remember this fact and foster such an opinion, especially on days when contentment is wanted for cold mutton and herbs therewith. Upon his cards was written his really magnificent name, Mr. Oliuthus Gallaway; but to his friends and all who love him he will ever remain plain Tommy.

Hector no longer treated them as boys—they were young men with whom he could converse as equals. They were men—he could reveal himself in his true light. He could even confess his sentiments on the nature of his occupation.

'To-morrow,' he said sorrowfully, one day towards the end of January, 'to-morrow I return to my classes. You think, then, perhaps, that I love them—my classes—*hein*? Listen! I will tell you a thing. I abhor them.' He spread out both his hands in the attitude of detestation. 'I shrink from them. If it were not for Claire, I would jump out of this frying-pan, which scorches and broils—yes, still, after twenty years and more—into the fire, which burns. I would cross the Channel. I would go to the gendarmerie of Calais. I would say—"Behold me! it is Philipon, the man of the Barricades; you would have sent him to Cayenne. He gives himself up, he surrenders; send him, then, to exile." Yes, my friends, but for Claire, who would weep, I would brave the danger of the voyage, I would be a convict with my brethren.'

He forgot that the empire which would have sent him there was gone, and that there was no more any reason why he should go to Cayenne at all, even if he did land at Calais. But the habit of regarding himself still as a refugee was too strong. Everybody knew, of course, that he was a French exile; it was rumoured that an immense price had been set upon his head, and it was believed that the Emperor -while Sedan was yet afar off—had often declared that he should know no rest till Hector Philipon was in a dungeon.

'Behold,' he went on to the astonished boys, 'the irony of fate! I, who love all women, because they are women; I who would believe them faultless—have to spend my life in finding out the faults of undeveloped woman—Girl. I would give them nothing but pleasure, yet I give them continual pain. It seemed to me, at first, incredible. Dionysius certainly became a schoolmaster, but he had alleviations. He was allowed to teach boys. He could therefore flog them, whip them, beat them, reward them with good strokes of foot and hand. You cannot beat—Girl. You may not throw books at—Girl. You must not suffer yourself to grow angry with—Girl. If you do, she laughs; she re-

joices; she triumphs. Such, my friend, is the true disposition of Girl.'

On the subject of Girl he was eloquent, even after twenty years of teaching. Time, the great consoler, could not reconcile him with his occupation.

'I was at first,' he said, 'unhappy and humiliated. I felt as if my goddess had been torn from me. But an inspiration—no doubt from her—made me separate Woman—whom I love—from Girl—whom I abhor. I regained my divinity. Woman smiled and became once more the giver of love and joy. As for Girl, she is not Woman at all. She is not like her in any respect. Woman has a figure to ravish the beholder's eyes; Girl is bony and makes her elbows to be felt. Woman thinks always in kindness; Girl nourishes hatred. Woman is confident of herself; Girl is jealous and suspicious. Woman inspires poetry; Girl has no imagination. When woman puts on dress she becomes a Parisienne; Girl puts on dress and remains—Girl. Woman always tries to please; Girl, never. *En fin*, she is not Woman. She is, if you please, caterpillar, grub, chrysalis. Can one love a chrysalis?

'Again, can one love a creature who cannot learn the verb irregular, who steals her exercises, copies her translation, and looks over her neighbour's shoulders at the *dictée*, who even makes grimaces—figure to yourself a Venus making grimaces; who pinches—yes, pinches—her companions? I understand the prudence of French mothers who confide their girls to the care of nuns. It is in order that men should not behold the chrysalis. But I am unhappy no longer. I have returned to my old worship. I say, "This is not Woman; this is Girl."'

These revolutionary sentiments were not uttered in the presence of his daughter. Claire knew that her father regarded his pupils with feelings which admitted of no favouritism, except that of the least dislike. But she did not know, and would not have understood, the distinction which he drew between Girl and Woman. He spoke also of graver things, of the Great Revolution, and her daughters, and of what they mean.

'I was born,' he said, 'when the Bourbons, who had learned nothing and forgotten nothing, had been back for ten years. I have conversed with many who remembered the beginning of the Revolution. Some of them had not forgotten its ideas and its phrases; they spoke still—though it was not the time for such words—of the Sovereign People, the Rights of Man, and oppressed Humanity. To them a Priest was an accursed hypocrite; a King was a sanguinary tyrant; and the voice of the People was the voice of God.

'They were phrases—yes, phrases. Yet, remember, before the Revolution there were no people, there was only a mob. Do you know what La Bruyère said?

'"I see certain wild animals scattered over the fields; black,

livid, burnt by the sun, bound to the earth. They have an articulate voice, and when they rise on their feet, they show a human form and are, in fact, men."

'It was a great thing to have made a people out of a herd – a flock. When the people found out themselves they began to dream greater things. I, too, my friends, being young and generous, dreamed with the others, and told my dream.'

His voice sank and he went on talking, as if to himself, in deep musical tone.

'The world for mankind. Yes – for whom else should it be? But they made mistakes. They talked of the Rights of Man. Yet the weak must be defeated. Is that a Right? There must also be rich and poor. Is it a right – to be poor? They talked of the Voice of the People and the Voice of God. How is one to recognise that Voice? I have sought for it, but I have never been able to hear it. Is the utterer of that Voice perchance a priest? Or if the people were to speak would they ask for more than sleep and idleness, with dancing, and feasting, and love-making? Is that the Voice of God?

'They told us that the people are full of generous aspirations. There have been four Revolutions. I do not remember any generous deeds or noble thoughts from the crowd. There have been guillotine and hanging *à la lanterne*, with pikes and heads upon them and barricades. But I do not remember to have heard of mercy or forgiveness, or any virtue at all. Wherefore I now think that noble thoughts descend not to the ignorant and the unlearned.'

The young men listened without interrupting.

'When a man gets the idea of humanity into his head it never leaves him. Never, never. He is henceforth doomed to think of his brother-man. To comprehend, even but a little, humanity, is to fill the brain. As for us, we meant well, but we hoped too much from governments. That is the mistake we always make: the thing we search for lies at our feet, we may stoop and pick it up, but we expect a government to do it for us. The Republic follows the Empire, yet the people remain the same, for even a Republic brings us no nearer the dream.'

'Yet if it is a noble dream,' said Will, 'you would not have it die.'

'It cannot die.'

'Will you tell us what it is – the dream?' asked Allen.

'No. There are some things, such as this dream, which cannot be taught and must be found out. It may be found by both of you, but it willl be in different forms.'

About this time a grievous doubt and perplexity fell upon the philosopher. He asked himself whether he had done right in putting into the heads of these young men knowledge of all kinds which might only make them discontented. He was

wrong to doubt. Discontent hurts no young man unless it is accompanied by laziness, when it is the Devil. As for knowledge, there is no position which is not rendered happier by its possession. I once knew a man whose business it was to tramp from office to office selling pens and books; in the evening he read and taught himself all kinds of things. His life was hallowed by his evenings. I have known a waiter who read the 'Saturday Review' regularly and was a happy waiter; and I have known a policeman who found food for thought when on his beat by recollections of Herbert Spencer. He was a contented policeman.

'My daughter,' he asked, 'have I done well?'

Claire did not know exactly what he meant and therefore replied, in general terms, 'that he always did well.'

'Have I done well,' he repeated, 'for these young men? There is not a better educated couple of young men in London, yet they are only clerks, and may remain servants all their lives unless they get a chance. Fate is sometimes malignant. They may never get the chance. Yet I cannot believe that these two boys, who know so much and can think and reason, will remain where they are.'

One day a Thought came to him. It was a half-holiday, and he was gardening among his lettuces, clad in the blue blouse which protected his shirt front and white waistcoat. It was a Thought so great, so splendid, so magnificent, that for the moment it intoxicated him and he reeled to and fro as one who had drunk strong drink. When he partly recovered from this first shock his Thought flared up in his brain like an electric light, as bright as a little sun or two, insomuch that he was blinded by its splendour. It took him half an hour, or thereabouts, to recover his sight, and then his cabbages looked every one like a great Koh-i-noor diamond, so bright was the splendour of this Thought. Next, the thought began to bellow in his ear, like the roar of cannons, or the blast of brazen trumpets, with the clashing of cymbals, the beating of big drums, and the musical roll of mighty organs, and all the time as bright as before. Finally, the Thought, still in this intense light and amid this unearthly instrumental clang, flew at him, banged him from side to side, shook him to and fro, thwacked him on the shoulder, buffeted him on either cheek, and finally doubled him up so that he fell backwards into the wheelbarrow among the cabbage-stalks, and weeds, and dead leaves—an undignified situation for one who never forgot his dignity.

All really great Thoughts are thus masterful when they first seek to possess a man. The history of great Thoughts is, in fact, one of the few really important subjects which remain to be written. The case of Peter the Hermit, for instance, may be compared with that of Hector Philipon. Peter's Thought came to him one night in his cell. He wrongly received it as if

it was a diabolical visitation, or the result of indigestion, and he wrestled with it all through the night but met defeat and discomfiture, and was found in the morning by a brother hermit —who had peacefully slept through the whole of the combat, dreaming of nothing but lentils, and beans, and pulse—fairly doubled up, limp and shattered, a thread-paper, all the conceit knocked out of him, and in the disposition of his shattered frame like unto a cocked hat. The story was published in the last century by Mr. Dicey, of Northampton, in a chap book, illustrated by a curious cut showing the holy man on a shutter after the clapper-clawing of the Thought. Christopher Columbus, on the other hand, made no resistance, but obeyed at once, and allowed the Thought to take possession like a bailiff. In his case it was a voice which called, a finger which pointed, a hand which pushed, day and night, so that he could never rest, never sleep, never sit down, never speak of anything unless in obedience to the perpetual admonition of that Thought. As was Christopher, so was our Hector. He accepted the Thought after the briefest resistance, and allowed it henceforth to guide and rule him.

If that Thought had not come to Hector Philipon this history would never have been written. If that Thought had not seized him one knows not what lives of discontent, unsatisfied desire, and thwarted ambition might have been the lot of these two clerks. And yet they do not know the history of this supreme moment, this wrestling and defeat. One can hardly guess in what words, did they know it, their gratitude could be expressed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TYRANNY OF THE THOUGHT.

M. Philipon, therefore, as soon as he recovered consciousness, submitted to the domination of the Thought. It was, in fact, the wisest thing he could do, and he was rewarded presently by falling into an ecstasy or rapture which carried him out of himself for the space of ten days. This is a thing which happens to none but the most exalted souls. During this period he conversed not at all with any one. It was the last fortnight of the summer vacation when this strange thing befell him.

Claire first observed the strangeness of it at dinner. Her father took the meal without a word, answering when he was addressed, but advancing no remark or proposition of any kind. After dinner he went into the garden and walked up and down the lawn. The boys came as usual and spoke to him, but he shook his head, and they joined Claire in her own room, wondering.

'What is it, Claire?' they asked.

'I do not know. He says nothing; he is quite silent. I have never known him like this before.'

Then Allen plucked up courage and went out upon the lawn again.

'Are you ill, sir?' he asked.

M. Philipon stopped. 'Not ill,' he replied, lifting eyes which were troubled. 'There is nothing the matter. Do not speak to me just yet.' Then his Thought overpowered him again, and he spread out his hands with a gesture of impatience and resumed his solitary walk.

The three within spoke in whispers. Night fell, but he was still walking, and took no heed, as if it mattered not to him whether it was night or day. Claire played something, but it did not seem to rouse him. At ten the boys went away, but he did not return their good night. Then Claire came and took him by the hand, and led him into the house unresisting Presently she gave him a candle and told him to go to bed; and in the middle of the night she woke up and heard him walking up and down his room.

This kind of conduct, repeated the next day, and for several days afterwards, gave his daughter and his friends the greatest uneasiness. He was not ill; he took his breakfast and dinner exactly as usual, but he did not talk, nor did he read, nor did he work in the garden. He was not unhappy, because as he walked about he smiled or laughed, and waved his hands cheerfully, yet with mystery, because no one could interpret that gesture.

In fact, he was wholly absorbed and dominated by the Thought, which, as he now quite clearly perceived, was not only powerful beyond all belief, but also full of grace, and like a goddess for inexpressible beauty, and moreover a stupendous Thought. So stupendous did it seem to him, that it loomed before his wondering eyes as a Thought more wonderful than had ever before been vouchsafed unto men.

'It is,' he might have said, enumerating other great Thoughts for purposes of comparison, in this communion and silent meditation, in this rapture of his mind, 'it is a greater Thought than that of Peter the Hermit, who yet did a considerable stroke of business with his; it is greater than that of Christopher Columbus, because he only doubled mankind, and therefore multiplied our troubles; it is greater than the Thought of him who proposed by means of steam to divide every kilomètre by a thousand; greater than the Thought of the man who, with an electric wire, abolished space altogether, so that people can go on quarrelling at opposite ends of the world; greater than the Thought of the man who proposed to send letters for a penny; greater even than that of him who discovered how to abolish pain and to let a man sleep while

surgeons saw off his leg—yea, to permit the martyr to dream of heaven while they toast him on a gridiron and perforate him with red-hot irons. Until I find words to express this Thought I am dumb. I cannot speak of anything else, and of this I have not yet learned to speak.'

In fact, M. Philipon was looking for words, and as yet no words came into his mind which were at all adequate to express the gravity of the crisis and the nature of the thing which was in his head. A Thought, however great, is nothing to the outer world unless it can be fitly and adequately expressed and presented in words so that everybody shall understand it. For instance, I know at this moment a man who has, quite unsuspected by his friends, in his head, and absolutely complete in all its parts, nothing less than a whole three-volume novel, and the best work of its kind ever yet presented to the world. He says so himself, and it is unlikely a man should be deceived in so important a point. He says, further, that the characters are absolutely original, the incidents new—fancy getting new incidents even from this kaleidoscopic world—the pathos inimitable, the wit and the humour quite unapproached. There is an immense, a universal, and a deathless reputation—he says, who ought to know best—in that novel. When once published it will be translated into every language; it will be the delight of Eskimo and Patagonian; it will civilise the Papuan, who wants civilising very badly; it will teach the Veddah how to laugh; it will, if anything can, convert the American Irish to ways of humanity, and will even soften the heart of the Nihilist. There only wants one thing—that this incomparable work shall be written down; and this, somehow, does not get done. It is always in his mind; he has arranged the situations; he has grouped the characters, constructed his plot, prepared the opening, and provided the *dénouement*. But he does not write it. He refuses to communicate the nature of the story, of which he is as jealous as a traveller who has discovered a new lake; he waits, growing moody, for the moment of inspiration, which never comes. He is getting old now, and he may some day soon die with the novel unwritten; he may even die of that obscure and obstinate disease—novel on the brain.

Something of this kind oppressed M. Philipon. His Thought held him fast, and he could not find fitting words in which to express it. It was not until many days of wrestling—not till he had turned the Thought over and over in his mind, and looked at it from every point of view, that he found freedom of speech. Had it been term-time, one trembles to think of uncorrected exercises and neglected rude translations.

'He will come round some time,' said Claire to the boys. 'Do not seem to be minding him.'

It mattered very little whether they minded him or not, because he observed nothing.

It was in the evening, when the boys had gone, that deliverance came. Claire had gone as far as the garden gate with them ; then she returned and laid her hand upon her father's arm, saying nothing. It was a fair moonlight night ; the air was heavy with the fragrance of jessamine and honeysuckle ; a still and solemn air of full but late summer, after a still, hot day. Claire's hand startled her father. He stopped, looked round him, sighed, and held up his forefinger, which meant 'Attention !'

The girl sat down on the seat within the porch, and listened. She was now nearly sixteen years of age, taller already than her father, a girl remarkable as yet for nothing but those deep blue eyes and that black hair. But one expects nothing remarkable from a girl at fifteen, unless she happens to be a maiden of Verona, where adventures have been known to arrive at a still earlier age.

She stood outside in the moonlight. He spoke gravely, even solemnly ; and he spoke slowly—in his native tongue, of course.

'My child,' he said, 'listen attentively to me. You are now nearly sixteen ; you have the manner and air of a greater age ; you are grown up ; you are a woman.'

'Yes, mon père.' She was rather frightened at this solemn introduction to the unfolding.

'I will treat you henceforth as a grown woman. You are also my daughter.'

'Yes, mon père.'

'I will treat you as a daughter who can be trusted.'

She stooped down and took his hand, and kissed it.

'I have a great thing to tell you. I have the grandest—the most magnificent scheme to communicate. I demand your absolute—your profound secrecy. That is necessary. Without secrecy I shall fail ; without your aid success will be difficult. Understand, Claire, what I ask of you will be difficult : it will require dissimulation ; pretence ; perhaps even we must do violence to Puritan ideas ; we may have to invent.'

Claire began to tremble. Secrecy, grandeur, magnificence, with pretence ! What could these mean but another revolution, with which she associated barricades and her father upon them?

'At least,' she said, 'I hope I should never betray any secret intrusted to me.'

Her father suppressed an epigram about Eve and her daughters, and went on—

'You will not, Claire, I am sure. Yet I want more than a mere promise of secrecy. I want a tongue which will not add to suspicion : I want a clear eye, an open face, a frank smile ; *en effet*, if you are a conspirator you must look as if there is no conspiracy.'

'Oh !' she cried ; 'do with me what you please ; but if you

are killed, and—and—oh! what a pity to put up barricades in the Forest!'

He laughed. 'Pretty innocent!' he said, 'be reassured, no one will be killed, there will be no fighting.'

'If there is to be no fighting, and if no one is to be in any danger——'

'No one, have no fear; you shall play your part with smiles on your face and joy in your heart, because the object of the conspiracy is one of your friends.'

'One of the boys?'

'Yes; you have already helped me well and faithfully; help me again, but this time follow my instructions in secret.'

'Which of them?' she asked eagerly, 'which of them is it?'

'It is Allen.'

'But what has Allen to do with conspiracies and revolutions?'

'Nothing—yet. But let us go within, I have much to say to you.'

She led the way into the house and lit the lamp. Then he began to unfold his plan, standing before the empty fireplace while Claire sat in her chair and listened. A well-bred Frenchman gesticulates but little, yet more than an Englishman, and he enforces his points with hands and fingers both. This was an important occasion and he gesticulated more freely than usual.

'First, child,' he said, 'forget that I have a plan and let us consider the boy, Allen. Fix your thoughts wholly upon Allen.

'He is eighteen years of age; he has been for three years a clerk in the city of London. He goes there every morning at half-past eight, and returns every evening at half-past six. He is away, therefore, for ten hours. During this long time he sits upon a stool, he copies letters, he enters figures in a book, he adds up, he makes notes, he carries messages, he goes here, he goes there—what do I know? He is a servant. It hurts no man to be a servant for a time. The discipline of obedience is good. Yet it must be a service where he will rise to be a master. In Allen's service he cannot rise unless by extraordinary chance, because he has no money. For him there is no future, he must always be a servant. It is already, for him, the life of a dog. In ten years it will be the life of a thousand dogs.'

'But if it is bad for Allen, it is also bad for Will,' said Claire, the impartial.

'I told you to consider Allen, only. It is not, however, so bad for the other. Will must rise: he is a young man who designs his own future and will force events; for such as Will are the great prizes of a merchant's career. I do not pity Will at present, I pity him only because in the end he will be so rich. It is the misfortune of the English people that they become so rich.'

'Then, about Allen?'

'He will become more and more miserable. In the city he has no future, he will neglect whatever chances offer; he will

see no opportunity ; such men as he are blind to opportunity ; if a hundred doors lie open to success he would see none of them, his thoughts will be elsewhere. Money is not in his mind, nor is success. I propose, therefore, first of all, to rescue the boy from the fate of the unsuccessful clerk.'

'But if Allen has no other opening?'

'Child, you have played all your life with the boy and you know not what he is, you know nothing about him. To be sure you are not yet of the age which looks below the surface. Know, then, that this boy is one of a kind not common. Nature makes but few like Allen Engledew ; of those whom she does make, most are thrown away and lost for want of a guide and instructor. They waste their lives in regrets, in idle efforts ; they succeed in nothing, because they do not try the one thing for which they were born ; they never know the satisfaction of life which comes of doing what they were intended to do. That, my child, is the only happiness. How happy, for example, is the grocer whom Heaven intended for that trade! How enviable the lot of him born for a pork butchery, who actually becomes a pork butcher! But such as Allen, without a guide, stray into wrong paths and are lost. I have been already—I will continue to be that guide to Allen By my help he shall be what nature intended him to be.'

'But what is that?' The girl's curiosity was now roused. She was to be a conspirator : there was to be a revolution ; but without those dreadful barricades with which her father's early history was so deeply charged. What was to be the part destined to be played by Allen? Was he to be an Oliver Cromwell, a Robespierre, a Marat, or Lamartine, even? For none of these positions did Allen seem eminently fitted.

Her father went on explaining. He seemed to forget that he was talking to his daughter before setting forth his views so as to make them clear to himself.

'Such a boy as Allen is, before all things, fond of books. This means two things—first, that he is curious about the world, eager to learn, and, secondly, that he is open to the influences of form and style. Words and phrases move him in the silent page as the common man is moved by the orator. He has been seized by the charm of language. You understand me not, my daughter ; but listen still. When a boy has once learned to love words, when he feels how a thing said one way is delightful, and said another way is intolerable, that boy may become a mere rhetorician, pedant, and precisian ; or an orator, one of those who move the world ; or a poet, one of those born to be loved.'

'And Allen, you think, will be—what? A rhetorician, or an orator, or a poet?'

'It may be the first, but I think he will not be. For I also observe in the boy the intuitions, the fire, the impatience, and the emotion, which belong to the orator who speaks because he

must, and to the poet who writes because he cannot help it. I think—nay, I am sure—that a lad with these sympathies cannot be a mere rhetorician or a maker of phrases.'

Claire listened, trying still to connect this theory with the conspiracy, but she failed.

'He reads, because it is his time for reading everything; he has no choice; it is his nature to read; he was born to read; he reads by instinct; he reads poetry, and his brain is filled with magnificent colours and splendid women; he reads romances, and he dreams of knights and stately dames; he reads history, and his heart burns within him; he reads biography, and he worships great heroes; he reads tragedy, and he straightway stalks about the forest another Talma; he reads idyls, and the meadows become peopled to him with shepherds and shepherdesses: he lives two lives. One of these is dull and mean; to think of it, while he is living the other, makes him angry and ashamed, for in the other he lives in an enchanted world where he is a magician and can conjure spirits.'

'You know all this, mon père! But how, unless Allen has told?'

'Allen has told no one; but yet I know. Some day, my child, I will tell you how I know. Allen is already half a poet, he must be made a poet indeed.'

'That will be delightful. Is this then your fine conspiracy?'

'It is, my daughter, the first part only. Of the second we will speak later.'

'But, if he is already half a poet——'

'At every step, my child, in the life of a man, there are two ways open, a right way and a wrong way. Allen must be guided into the right way.'

'Oh, yes, mon père!' she clapped her hands; 'Allen shall be a great poet, and I will do what you please to tell me. This is a conspiracy that I shall like.'

It had been a long preamble, and she did not understand why there was so much mystery.

'For your part, my child, Allen has arrived at the time when he must have a confidant and a companion. I have studied the symptoms, I am sure that he has already begun to try timidly whether he too cannot put thoughts into rhyme. I know the blush of his cheek, the flashing of the eye, the outward sign of the secret thought. Behold him! I can see him now'—he stood as if actually watching the lad, with his forefinger lifted—'I see him alone in his room at night: the door is locked, the lamp is lit, the desk is open, the paper is before him, but he writes not; he hesitates, he is ashamed; at last with a blush, as a girl who confesses her love, he timidly sets something on the paper. Indeed, to write these lines is more difficult for him than for any girl to confess her love. Oh, holy modesty! Oh, blush of virginal youth! It is only from those

who feel the sacred awe for written words that great things can be expected. The written word remains ; it must not be lightly spoken, it remains whether it is false or true, whether it is beautiful or it is ugly ; whether it is sublime or whether it lifts up or drags down the heart. Let Allen always tremble when he translates thought into word.'

'I do not understand, mon père. How do you know all this?'

'Again, my child, I will tell you another day. You know now what Allen is and what he may be. First, he is to be a poet. You must help me—thus.

'Allen must have some one in whom he can confide. Will possesses not the poetic temperament. The blood of Olinthus is pure beer. Therefore, Claire, my child, it is you who must be his friend.'

'But he tells me nothing about his poetry.'

'My daughter, a clever girl can make a young man tell her everything.'

Claire blushed. It is not unpleasant to be told that one has such great power over other people. Of course she did not believe the statement ; it is fortunately given to few girls to understand how great is their power over men. I do not think they will find it out until they have so altered themselves with political economy and platform oratory that they have destroyed this power and lost it all.

'To begin with, Claire, you will lead him to talk of himself, of poetry, and will ask him why he, too, does not write verse.'

Had Claire been some other man's daughter, Hector would have added to this simple injunction a few remarks on the wiles of coquetry, but he refrained.

'When the boy has become a poet, then—the next stage—Ask not,' he added in the deepest tones, 'what this stage may be.'

'I do not want to know,' she replied ; 'it is enough for me that Allen is to be a great poet.'

Just then a thing happened which at the moment had a supernatural appearance. Beyond the cottage garden was the lane which led to the forest. As Claire spoke, there passed before the garden gate, slowly, with hanging head, no other than the figure of Allen Engledew himself. As he passed he raised his head and turned it as if to look at the house. The moon fell full upon his face and lit it with a strange, ghostly light. His large and lustrous eyes met Claire's, but they did not seem to see her, and he passed along like a ghost, or like a dumb actor upon the stage.

It was nothing supernatural, it was only Allen himself in the flesh ; he had been strolling alone in the forest, to dream away a summer evening beneath the moonlit branches.

'Behold!' said the man with the Thought, 'we have seen our poet! His future is in our hands and he knows it not.'

CHAPTER VII.

SAMSON AND DELILAH.

Once in the East, a long time ago, when mankind was still in the enjoyment of lusty youth, and carrying on as if youth would last for ever, with continual fighting, feasting, drinking, singing, plundering, murdering, pillaging, sacking, burning, hanging, drowning, and torturing, there was a kinglet who made the personal acquaintance of two or three gods. Not that he really was admitted into the very best circles, but one or other of the more affable deities would sometimes call and dine, drink his best wine, and promise things. Silenus, for instance, got his pupil Bacchus to let this kinglet turn everything he touched into gold; but the gift would not work, as his Majesty found out when he sat down to breakfast and discovered that not only the plate but also the bloater on the plate became pure gold. It is related that the hungry and discomfited monarch immediately traded away the gift for something in the everlasting-youth line (which proved a forgery). Now on one occasion this friend of the Immortals was asked to hear a rival performance on the flute by Pan and Apollo. He had no ear for music at all and so tossed up heads for Pan and tails for Apollo. It came down heads, and so he gave the decision for Pan. 'You are an ass,' cried Apollo in a rage, 'and the son of an ass, and your ears shall be the ears of an ass.' The king put up his hand to feel—and so they were. It is not recorded what Pan said or did, but probably he only laughed in an unfeeling way, and went off with his syrinx to frighten the shepherds of Arcadia. Then this kinglet got a tall bonnet made into which he poked both his long ears, and hoped that nobody would find out. As people were then, as now, entirely occupied with their own affairs, nobody did find out the fact for a long time. But it made the king uneasy: he was afraid to take his usual allowance at night for fear of getting tipsy and prattling or letting his long cap fall off. One day, however, being alone in the garden, he could not refrain from removing the cap as he sat in the shade, and while the wind played deliciously about those long and hairy ears, it happened that an under-gardener, a varlet at six shillings a week and his dinner, who was pretending to be at work in the bushes, saw this remarkable and wonderful thing. Could it be? Was it possible? Did his eyes deceive him? Was witchery about? The king with two long, very long, completely finished perfect donkey's ears! While he gazed, motionless, his Majesty replaced the bonnet and walked away with as much dignity as if his royal ears were human.

When that varlet knocked off work for the day it was

observed that he was possessed of a strange manner; he forgot his supper beer; he sat apart; he was gloomy. The reason was this dreadful secret. For if he told anybody, his own head would certainly be off—in a jiffy, he assured himself; or he would be tied up in a sack and so go a-fishing or a-shrimping in the sea by himself; or he might have his outlying portions cut off, such as hands, feet, nose, ears, and tongue; or he might be burned; something dreadful would infallibly happen to him, unless he could keep that secret as tight as wax.

He it kept for a week, suffering all the time tortures as great as the punishment he wished to escape. He did not suffer himself to talk at all, knowing that he was, by gift of the gods, a babbler; he could not drink; he ventured not into any company, although a youth of gregarious turn; he did not dare even to sleep, because he talked in his sleep. At last he felt that he must tell that secret or die. He went, therefore, into the biggest and most solitary field he could find, and then, making a little hole in the ground, he confided his secret, carefully wrapped in a pig's whisper, to the earth. Then he covered up the hole and went home quite happy, and got drunk that very evening, so relieved from fear was he.

But there was grass growing beside that hole, and near the grass there were reeds, and beside the reeds a brook. Now the grass whispered the secret to the reeds, and the reeds to the brook, and the brook to the river, and the river told the sea. That did not matter much, because though the sea is credulous, and swallows everything, it never gossips. But the grass told the flowers as well, and the flowers told the bushes, and the bushes told the trees, and the trees told the birds, and they told everybody; and the under-gardener pretended to wonder like the rest of the world, and the king left off his long cap and went back to his old little cap, and let his ears stick up, and had them gilded, and said they were beautiful and an ornament to any crowned head and the blessed gift of the gods. He also ordered them to be represented on his coins and statues, and prayers were offered to Apollo that he would thus make the ears of all the people. But Apollo refused to hear.

Thus is it shown, by lively parable, after the manner of the ancients, how one single secret may embitter and even destroy a life. But, in fact, it is only at the outset that a secret is intolerable. When it is in the way of a man's profession to hear and to guard secrets, they cease to be a burden. Lawyers who get to know a prodigious quantity of secrets are never a bit the worse, and I know at least one freemason whose knowledge of the craft secrets has never caused him a moment's pang.

Claire, with this secret upon her mind, went about at first in the most dreadful terror of letting it out. She dreamed at night that she had revealed it to Olinthus, who grinned contemptuously and pointed fingers of scorn at Allen and her

father, and at herself, and said, 'Gar! He a poet! Why he hasn't got a penny!' And next, she told Will, who said it was a thing very likely indeed to be fulfilled, because Allen was a first-rate fellow and capable of anything; but that she was a silly child for telling, and that he should never think well of her any more. And lastly, that she told Sir Charles Withycomb and his friends upon the green. Sir Charles said that it was a most presumptuous and impudent thing of this young man even to think of—being a clerk on fifty pounds a year and his father bankrupt for a paltry sum—and that it was a most mischievous thing of Monsieur Philipon to put wild ideas into a boy's head. Then Mr. Colliber said that he felt it his duty to acquaint Miss Billingsworth with the fact that she was nourishing a seditious viper, who made boys discontented, and turned away their thoughts from getting money. This he proceeded to do, and her father was turned out of his place, and in her dream she saw him, with herself, trudging along the road, both with bare feet, and so dreadfully hungry that she really had to wake up in order to escape those awful pangs. Then she imitated the Lydian king's under-gardener, because she felt that she must say something about it to somebody. But she was not so foolish as to tell the grass or to whisper her secret anywhere in the Forest. She told the school-girls, and in such a crafty and cunning manner that they did not understand the least bit in the world what she was telling them.

By this time Claire had begun to take part in the teaching work of the school, being half pupil, half teacher. She learned music, and she taught everything, including the elements of French. A great part of this work consists, as everybody knows, of exercises, which Claire, instead of giving out of a book, now began to write upon a black-board for her pupils to copy and translate. At this crisis she used to write exercises such as the following: 'The poor boy. The son of the widow. He became a poet. He wrote beautiful verses. The girl helped him. He became famous. He became a great man. The girl watched him. Everybody loved him.' She could not possibly help it: she must tell some one. In this way she told the girls. They were quite young girls, who mechanically wrote down what she dictated, and then, with no more feeling for the 'poor boy' than boys themselves under similar circumstances have for Caius and Balbus, proceeded to smudge their fingers, write down and scratch out, pinch each other, whisper and copy, ask the governess, wish it was twelve o'clock, wish that the Tower of Babel had never been built, blot their books, dog's ear their dictionaries, make grimy their grammars, and vie with each other in committing just as many faults as can possibly be made in a given number of words.

They finished and handed in their work, and Claire sent

them away to wash off the ink, and to dry the tears of injured vanity which had been provoked during the lesson. She never corrected that set of exercises ; she was afraid lest some of the elder girls might get hold of them and suspect something, so she burned them all. But nobody would have suspected : what was there to suspect ? Who in that seminary of useful knowledge dreamed of poets ? The pupils wrote down the words, but took no heed of them, and her secret was safe. How fortunate ! For if she had told the grass, and the grass had told the river Roding, and the Roding had told the Lea, and the Lea had told the Thames, the secret would have been all over London in no time.

Claire's opportunity came in a day or two. In fact, it was at four o'clock on Saturday afternoon when Allen appeared at the garden gate and asked her if she was going into the Forest that afternoon. Her father was in the garden hunting slugs, Will was away at Abridge, or among the Rodings, or on the Waltham road, on his bicycle : they would be quite alone.

Allen had been reading and had forgotten to take off his glasses ; he walked beside her pensive, dreamy, full of thought, and silent. Claire, in her white frock and straw hat, tripped beside the lanky youth, waiting for him to speak, and wondering how she should introduce the subject. When she thought of what was intended she blushed and felt a kind of awe. She was to help make Allen a great man. When he was already a great man, she thought, he would be separated entirely from them : they would watch his rise from the obscurities of the Forest. This made her feel sad, yet more resolute to do her part. As for him, he was to know nothing ; he must go on being trained without suspicion ; he must never know that he was guided and directed by an unseen hand.

They walked side by side across the meadow, on which stood two or three gipsy caravans, and up the long broad walk of grass with the old trees on either side. Presently they arrived at the old trysting-place, where lay the fallen tree, and where they had once, long ago, run the race for the golden apple.

No one had taken away the old fallen trunk. But gipsies or country people had lopped off the branches bit by bit for firewood ; mosses had grown in its chinks and crannies ; the bark had fallen off, and the wood itself was full of rotten places. Some of the old roots were left, and these were overgrown with ivy—the broad-leaved, green ivy of which the forest is so prodigal, and with which so many startling effects are produced. The ivy lent to the rugged roots a touch of beauty. As to the trunk no one knew, except the woodpecker, what a host of creatures this old trunk of rotting wood contained ; and beneath and beside it there was quite a little coppice, a tangled undergrowth of grasses, ferns, and wild flowers.

'Our old tree,' said Claire, 'grows more beautiful every

year. When it was first blown over do you remember how ugly it was, and what an eyesore?'

Allen, being still in the first stage of the poetic development, when the hands are reached out to grasp everything, thought grandly how things might here be said about the decay of life, and the beauty of suffering, and the picturesqueness of death. But he found no words ready at the moment to express these ideas, which were consequently lost and wasted.

'Is it not a place,' the girl went on, blushing, because she did not feel what she said, but only pretended—'is it not a place full of poetry, Allen? That is why you love it so much. The others come here seldom now. But you never tire of the Forest.'

'I come,' he replied, 'because I like to be alone and to think.'

'Yes,' said Claire. 'Your mind is so full of verses that you come here to remember their beautiful thoughts.'

Allen blushed. At his age one blushes easily. It was kind of Claire to credit him with being full of beautiful thoughts. No one else thought of such a thing. And yet it was quite true, and the only difficulty was that of separating his own beautiful thoughts from other men's.

'Whom are you reading now, Allen?'

'I have got Keats. Oh!'—he breathed a deep sigh—'Claire, you must read Keats; he takes the old Greek stories, you know, and then he dresses them up in his own language, and then—then—oh!'

'I know,' said the girl, wise now, like all girls when they have been taught, 'I know what you mean; he puts life into the old stories, and the figures live again, and we feel that he has taught us to see how beautiful they are.'

'Yes, Claire; you, too, can feel poetry. I did not know it.'

'You did not give me your confidence, Allen. If you had chosen to talk to me about what you like, you might have found out that I can understand a little as well as Will.'

She spoke with the words and she looked with the eyes of a coquette. She was, in fact, making a first tentative attempt to use that power which her father said a woman has over every man. She had pondered over that maxim a great deal, but as yet she did not understand its full meaning.

'Claire!' he cried with a gesture of impatience, 'there is nothing in the world like poetry; there is nothing else worth trying for. Oh! you must read Keats. Listen.' He opened the volume at hazard almost, and read:—

> Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;
> For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye;
> Not like the formal crest of later days,
> But bending in a thousand graceful ways.

You see, Claire, he cannot help writing poetry; he *sees* it all plain before him. And this :—

> "He was a poet, sure a lover, too,
> Who stood on Latmos' top, what time there blew
> Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below,
> And brought in faintness, solemn, sweet, and slow,
> A hymn from Dian's temple."

Isn't it splendid? Or listen to this :—

> "Full on the casement shone the wintry moon,
> And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
> As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
> Rose bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
> And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
> And on her hair, a glory like a saint."

'Oh, Claire, it takes away your breath only to read it! What must it have been to have written it?' Why, his secret had escaped him, but he knew it not.

'Allen!' cried Claire, becoming, for the moment, Delilah or Vivien, clasping her hands to her heart, 'what must it be actually to become—to be—a Poet! Oh! oh!'

She did not over-act her part a bit. In fact, she was so much of an artist that she half-unconsciously under-acted it. There was enough feeling in her voice, in her gesture, and her attitude as she clasped her hands; but not too much. There was less emotion than Allen himself would have put into it if he had dared to say all he felt, yet more than he would have expected from Claire.

'To be a Poet, Allen!' she repeated.

The conscious swain made no reply; his cheek became crimson; he trembled; the tears even came into his eyes by reason of the great yearning that possessed him to tell Claire what she already knew.

She went on, watching him. Surely he would confide in her; he would confess.

'If I thought,' she said, 'that I had the gift of verse, how small everything else would seem to me! But I would not dream about it, as I think some young men do. I would work every day.' This it is to have had lessons from your father in the art of diplomacy. A week before she could not have made any part of this speech.

'Claire!' cried Allen helplessly.

'I would work by myself; I should be ashamed, perhaps, to show my work; every day I should feel that I was nearer to being a Poet: that would make me happy. I should say to myself that so great a gift must not make one proud, but grateful, and a Poet may make men so much better. But I would have no other ambition—not one other ambition.'

He was listening with rapt eyes and burning cheeks. A long, ill-dressed lad, with worn coat and baggy knees, large

red hands, and spectacles. Yet his eyes made him beautiful. Why, all that Claire described he had felt—he was feeling; the same hopes, the same shame, the same locking up in his own room, with the paper spread before him, the same sacred awe at seeing words coherent, words his own, flow from his pen. He gasped, he choked; the temptation was irresistible. He fell. Like Samson, he parted with his secret to a woman—perhaps, like Samson, to his own undoing. Certainly from that moment his career was no longer his own; it belonged to the Conspiracy. Had he kept his secret he would have continued the City clerk: he might have become the perfect City clerk; he might even have become a partner, or the clerk with a share in the Concern; but he would never have been a poet, except in ambition. It was a supreme moment, and he knew it not.

'Claire,' he whispered, 'are you a magician? Can you read thought? I am—I am—I am enduring all that you say. Oh, Claire! Claire! keep my secret.' He grasped her hand. 'I am trying to be a poet; I dream all day that I am a great poet; at night I am kept awake by the splendour of the vision that is before me. I think I see the poets passing before my bed, bidding me be of good courage, because I am one of themselves. There are Byron, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley—all of them. And I am a poet, too, when I see them. They smile as they pass. Yet not a line written—that is, published; hardly a single thought caught out of the thousands in my head and turned into verse. Yet I dare to dream.'

'Poor Allen!' Her eyes filled with tears. Her father, then, was right. 'The time will come; you will catch the thought, you will find the words; be of good courage.'

'Yes, yes. I live in hope; yet it is all to do.'

'Why, you foolish boy, at eighteen what would you have? Begin to work, Allen. Do not dream any longer. Begin.'

'I have begun,' he said, with more blushes; 'that is, I have already—tried to write—poetry.'

So all was told; so Allen fell into the trap; so his secret became the property of the Conspiracy.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE CHAMBER.

After the confession they walked home in silence. Claire was ashamed because she pretended while Allen was so much in earnest; yet she rejoiced over her success. The reality of a man's ambition always frightens a woman at first.

Allen was also ashamed and yet relieved. It was become almost intolerable to have no one in whom he could confide.

At home, in the family circle, ambition is too often treated with the wet blanket or the bucket of cold water: no one believes that Johnny is going to be a great man. How can he? None of his grandfathers, cousins, brothers, or sisters have been great. Of course, he will grow up in obscurity, like the rest of them. To dream of anything else is like contempt for one's ancestors—a dreadful impiety. Every house, in fact, is situated in the city of Nazareth. Allen knew that his mother, for instance, could not have the least sympathy with poetry. She knew none except the ancient and modern poems in her hymn-book. Even if he were to succeed she would have no sympathy. There is a success more disheartening than any failure—to win the greatness you desire and not to have it recognised. There was once, I remember, a respectable pair in a country town. They had three sons born unto them. One of these carried on his father's trade, became rich, and was much thought of by his fellow-citizens. The second, who was the dullest of the three, went to Cambridge, and was fain to take a degree in Law. Now, in his day this branch of learning was considered to be reserved for those who could not take their degree, by reason of ignorance and thickness of brain, in Arts. Then he presently went into holy orders, and is now a country vicar, and more solemn than the whole bench of bishops. The third became a painter, and a great painter, and an Academician, and is held in high esteem, so that his name is known everywhere. The venerable parents regard this son even as the Prodigal. To be sure, he does not live on husks, nor has he yet returned to ask for the fatted calf, and from all they can hear he lives in a good house. But, you see, his greatness is not of a kind they can understand. Their eldest son is, in his line, eminent; he is a warm man; he is ex-mayor, and is greatly respected. They are proud of him. Their next son, who took the Law degree, and wags an unrelenting forefinger in a pulpit, dressed in a white surplice and a hood, is also an intelligible success. It is not every mother who has a son in the Church. But how is the painter to be classified, and with whom compared?

This might be, in some sort, Allen's portion. His mother's disappointment would be dreadful if she learned his ambition. When he set forth on that morning when he was to mount the desk of the City clerk for the first time, she took him in her arms and solemnly kissed him with tears. 'Go,' she said, 'go, my son; retrieve the disgrace of your father. He failed, poor man, not through any fault of his own—no, no—it was his partner's doing—it was all John Stephens. But work, Allen, work, and get a good name, and perhaps some day you, too, will be rich.'

So it seemed to him, as he walked homeward through the great forest, that there was no one to trust except Claire. Will, to be sure, might be trusted to keep a secret. But he cared

nothing at all about poetry; he regarded books and literature from the simplest point of view, namely, as the means of conveying information. He had no feeling for style; did not understand, in spite of instruction, what it meant, and was careless of the collocation of words, provided they conveyed the meaning intended. Allen, on the contrary, was quite happy even if there was no meaning at all, provided the words were musical and rang melodiously on his ear. Claire would understand him —nay, she had already understood him.

'You think,' he asked timidly, 'you think, Claire, that I may, some day, succeed?'

'Oh, Allen, I am sure you will!' she replied, with the generous warmth of feminine sympathy which strengthens a man's courage and consoles the most despondent. Observe that Claire pretended no longer: she was now quite overpowered by the depth of his ambition. She believed in him henceforth as Kadijah believed in the Prophet—because he said it. Had he never produced a line of poetry in his life she would have believed in him to the end.

'As for the City,' Allen went on, 'I hate it, Claire. The same work every day: the same letters to be written; the same papers to be copied: the same figures to be entered and added up; the same chatter of the clerks. Will doesn't mind it; he takes an interest in it. I take none—I hate it! Why, if I were to tell the fellows in the office about my—my verses they would think it the best joke they had ever heard.'

'Patience, Allen,' she said, 'patience, and keep up your courage.'

'I should have courage, and I could endure a great deal more of the City, if I had only confidence in myself.'

They parted at the garden gate. Usually Claire contented herself with a nod and a good-night. This evening she gave Allen her hand. He understood the act to mean an assurance of secrecy, but she meant more, though she did not dare to put it into words. She meant an act of respect and an appeal for forgiveness. She started with pretence and play-acting; she ended with conquest which brought humiliation with it.

'Allen,' she whispered, 'you have only half trusted me.'

'What more is there that I can tell you?'

'You can show me your verses.'

He blushed to the roots of his hair, and left her without a word. When he got home he found his mother waiting supper for him. She knew that he spent nearly all his evenings at the Cottage, and she asked no questions.

'Things going on well at the office, Allen?' she inquired. It was a daily question, just as the old residents, when they met in the morning, asked each other what news was stirring in the City.

'Nothing changes at the office, mother,' he replied wearily.

'We go there every morning, we come away every evening; nothing ever will change.'

She sighed. It was not thus that an ambitious youth should talk.

'There are many things,' she said, 'which change. Young men become known, they are promoted, they become heads of departments, they even become partners, or they go away and set up for themselves, as your father did when he had saved some money, and was known to all the friends of the House.'

'Yet he failed,' said Allen bitterly.

'Yes, he failed.' The widow's eyes filled with tears.

'Forgive me, mother. I will—I will retrieve the name; if not in one way, then in another. There are many ways, believe me, my dear mother.'

'There is only one for you, Allen; it is to win a good name, and make money in the City—where *he* hoped to make it.'

He made no reply, but presently finished his supper, and went to his own room for the night. There, with a beating heart, he unlocked his desk and spread out his verses before him. Many nights had he done this, but this night it was different; he was going to read them to himself for the last time; to-morrow he would give them to Claire. The sweet secrecy would be gone; he would no longer be sole guardian, so to speak, of his children. Even for Claire's eyes to rest on them seemed a profanation. Besides, what would she think of them? How would she like them?

The door was locked; his mother had gone to bed; the house was perfectly silent; he was quite alone with his poems. He was not going to write; he was going to correct, to arrange, to read dispassionately. He spread out his papers, placed the light conveniently, and began his reading critically. Here a very odd thing happened to him. To-night he felt very strongly the strangeness of it. It happened to him, in fact, whenever he sat down to read his own verses, but it never happened so very strongly as on that night. The thing was this. At the first outset, particularly if he had not looked at the verses for a week or so, a chill disappointment fell upon him, and he grew pale with shame; for he always, on each occasion, found them cold, weak, and ineffective; a dreadful flatness marked them all. Presently, as he continued reading, a change would come over his mind—the verses would become natural, warm, glowing with fancy, full of sacred fire. Now the reason, which he did not know, was this, and no other. He began his reading determined to maintain the attitude of an outsider. He was resolved to read on as if the leaflets before him were the work of another man altogether; as if he had been called upon by publishers to give an opinion on the literary merits of the poem. He began well, but he could not keep up the mental position. Presently, little by little, he began to remember the things

which had been in his head, the effects which he desired to produce, when he wrote down those lines. These effects were always ambitious, so that he really read, not the actual words, but the great and soaring thoughts which had been in his heart. There is nothing in the whole of literature so splendid in shape and colour as the half-defined imagery of a young man's fancy; but it has never been caught. And, while Allen read, it was well that the door was shut, because he sat with tears in his eyes, with trembling hand, and with his heart aglow.

While he read and corrected, this short night of June passed away, and presently he became aware that it was already broad day—that the sun was up and the blackbird singing in the Forest. He bitterly thought of the morrow; he would have to go to church, instead of talking to Claire about his poetry. He threw himself upon the bed, where he dreamed, not of sweet verses, as he would have wished, but of an ignoble day at his desk in the City, and a dinner at Crosby Hall in the company of Tommy.

'Your face tells me something, Claire,' said her father when the girl returned.

'Allen has confessed to me,' she replied gravely. 'You were right. He dreams of being a poet.'

On Monday evening Allen came again, but not alone, for Will was with him on his bicycle. Claire joined them, and they all three went off, as usual, into the Forest. By this time Will, nearly six feet high, was as handsome a young fellow as one may wish to see, rejoicing in his strength and in his youth. The girl could not avoid observing the difference between his careless, natural ease, his confident bearing, his brave eyes, which looked as if he was ready to meet any reverses whom Fate might send, and fight them all, and the anxious, nervous face of Allen, with his sharp, thin face, slight figure, and stooping shoulders. Will managed his iron horse with dexterity, sometimes careering round them, sometimes reining in the eager steed to a walk, sometimes darting swiftly ahead, and as swiftly returning. In these brief absences the pair conversed in guilty whispers.

'I sat up all Saturday night,' said Allen, 'and looked over my verses. It seemed as if I was reading them for the last time. Do you think you would like to see them, Claire—really?'

'Oh! Allen, of course I would, if you think you can trust me with them.'

They were both blushing, as if the secret were the recollection of a crime.

'I want,' he went on hurriedly, because Will might return at any moment, 'I want nothing but a candid opinion, Claire—not praise which I do not deserve.' This is, in fact, what all

young writers want. 'I want your dispassionate judgment. Tell me what my faults are.'

'I shall see no faults, Allen.'

'Yes, oh yes! I am sure there are faults. Sometimes I think they are full of faults; but sometimes—oh! Claire, do not think me vain—sometimes I think they are really good—worthy even of being published.'

'I am sure they are, Allen.'

'Then, Claire'—his hand stole into the breast-pocket of his coat—'I have them here. Remember, if I give them to you it must be on the promise that you are not to flatter me. Put them into the fire if you find them bad.' He said this with so rueful a face that Claire was fain to laugh at him.

'You silly boy,' she said; 'give me the papers. And what would you say if I were really to put your poems into the fire? To be sure, we have no fire in June.'

He handed her the packet, solemnly and slowly, almost as an alchemist might hand to a disciple the secret of the elixir.

'Here is my work,' he said. 'Hide the packet, Claire. Quick, quick! I see the bicycle coming back.'

Back, in fact, it came, the face of the rider glowing in the sunlight.

'Oh, you two!' he cried, ranging alongside. 'Has Allen been firing off any more verses, Claire? The way he spouts sometimes is enough to lift off the top of a fellow's head. Did he tell you what Keats had the good luck to say about the sunset? With these fellows it's all what they say about a thing. I don't believe they really care about anything half so much as we people who don't make rhymes.'

'Ah!' said Claire; 'they care so much more for beautiful things than we do that they cannot help putting their thoughts into beautiful words.'

'Don't believe it,' said the lad of prose, 'else they wouldn't make so much fuss about what they say. But I like a rattling good story in verse. Give me the tale of the fellow who kept the bridge; but I can't see any fun in bothering one's head about a fellow who couldn't be happy aboard ship till he'd said something fine about the sea.'

Claire laughed.

'Mostly he throws Keats at my head. Keats was no end of a fellow; once he worried the life out of the west wind, and once he got hold of a moon, and turned it full into a room; you never saw such a sight. He died young, did Keats—so that Allen had better look out.'

'Why?' asked Claire.

'Well, you see, Allen is getting so full of the poets that one of these fine days he will be setting up for a poet himself. Next thing, he'll die young, like Keats; or he'll leave off believing anything at all, like Shelley'—here he wondered why

Claire, as well as Allen, looked red and guilty—'or perhaps he'll leave the City and live here, and write odes on the buttercups, like Wordsworth. He'll be a lost Allen, Claire.' He laughed, turned his vehicle, and was off again along the level road. Will at least was a lad with no dreams.

'You see,' said Claire, 'there is no great merit in guessing your secret. But it was my father who told it to me first.'

'Your father?'

'Yes; and now Will half guesses it. Allen'—she spoke, the deceitful creature, as if moved by a sudden thought—'you want better advice than I can give you. All I can say is, that I shall find your verses beautiful and delightful; I know I shall. You must read them yourself to my father.'

'To your father? Claire, I could not.'

'Why, he is not a harsh critic. Besides, you must have some one to take counsel with, and I am only a very ignorant girl.'

'Not ignorant, Claire, unless Will and I are ignorant. You know all that we know.'

'Then, come, Allen, come with me to my father. See, he has guessed your secret already.'

'I am ashamed, Claire.' This tall lad of eighteen was like a girl for shyness over his own verses. A man's works are to himself, when he is a boy, and bashful, even more than the charms of a maiden are to her.

'You are ashamed? Why? Because your verses are your own, Allen? That is all the more reason for pride. Come.'

They found M. Philipon in the garden among the vegetables. Consequently he had on his working blouse. At their approach he stood up and straightened his back. 'In this garden, Allen,' he said, 'there is a slug—not a common slug, a slug of vast resource and insatiable appetite. Every night I search for this slug. I give him no peace; I have vowed his destruction. Yet he is a crafty slug, and he eludes my hunt. The nature of the slug is treachery, cowardice, and greediness. For him I grow the finest peas, the largest lettuces, the roundest cabbages. He mocks me. He eats my substance; he waits till I am in bed; then he laughs and comes out. By this time he must be like a pillow for fatness.'

'Father,' said Claire, 'can you leave the slug this evening? Allen wishes to ask your counsel.'

They all went solemnly into the house, and M. Philipon sat down, assuming visibly the air of a Boileau.

'Allen has written some verses,' Claire explained, abruptly plunging at once into the middle of things. Girls have no understanding of a young man's modesty. 'He wants no one to know about them as yet, except ourselves, and he asks you to hear him read them.'

Allen acquiesced by a feeble inclination of the head and a

sickly smile. He *could* not have said all this for himself in terms so plain and direct; and he felt somehow as if Claire should have participated, so to speak, in his own reserve.

'Allen has written some verses.' Why, she might just as well have said, 'Allen has walked ten miles.' Yet the thing was said, and her father was in the secret. It seemed like the letting out of water.

'You have done well,' said the critic, folding his arms, 'to entrust your ambitions to the sympathy of your playfellow and the experience of your teacher. Read your works. Expect, young man, from me a rigid censure. I look for nothing short of the merits of French verse: these merits are precision, *netteté*, clearness of thought; everywhere the right word. Even in English, where there are so many words, there is always the right word. Claire, my child, sit beside me. Open your heart to the noble sentiments of the poet, and leave to me the coldness of the critic.'

This was encouraging; Boileau, in his age, might so have received Béranger in his youth.

CHAPTER IX.

POET UNTO POET.

Allen took his papers from Claire's hands and prepared to read them. M. Philipon made one more effort towards hardening his features to the rigidity of the unbending critic, while Claire became obviously the sympathetic admirer. I cannot conceive of any situation more awkward for a young man of eighteen than this—fortunately an unusual one—of reading his own verses aloud. When a man has achieved a reputation, when he is sure of receiving at the end murmurs of thanks and praise, to read a poem is part of the greatness. But in the inception, even before the very beginning, when one is still a timid, sensitive lad, conscious that the verses are essays, tentatives, at the best not too good, the ordeal is terrible.

In this case that dreadful feeling already alluded to, of chill disappointment and disgust with his own work, remained with him from the beginning to the end, and it made him read badly, so that he did not even do his work justice. He saw, too, that Claire was disappointed; he saw it because her eyes, which should have brightened had the verses pleased, and were telltale eyes, dropped, and she did not lift them again. There was no encouragement in her drooping head and downcast eyes. The critic's upper lip was evidently stiffened to say cruel things.

As for the verses, what can one expect of eighteen? They

were skeletons, feeble imitations, weak in language, false in sentiment; they had every fault. They had, however, one virtue—they possessed that quality difficult to define, impossible to describe, which is called promise. If you go to the Grosvenor Gallery, for instance, or any other gallery, you will find plenty of feeble pictures by amateurs and beginners; among them, however, you will discover one or two which have promise.

Claire, who could see that the verses were stilted, weak and cold, but could not see the promise in them, was bitterly disappointed. Poor Allen! was this the outcome of all his reading? Was it with this little bundle of feeble couplets that he hoped to achieve immortality? Not an original thought, not one novel expression, not one happy phrase from beginning to end. She could not lift her eyes. She would have cried with vexation had she dared.

When the poet finished his reading he stood pale, gloomy, almost despairing. For he was self-convicted; he felt now for the first time how really bad his verses were. The enthusiasm of his conception came not, as usual, to conceal the feebleness of his execution. He looked so miserable that Claire would have burst into tears, but for a most surprising thing.

Conceive her astonishment when, at this painful moment, her father sprang to his feet and seized Allen by both hands, crying, 'Courage, my pupil! I congratulate you; you shall be a poet.'

It was not out of kindness. Hector, the critic, saw the promise. Allen gasped.

'You think so?' he cried, with burning cheeks and glowing eyes. 'Oh, you think——'

'I am sure,' replied the new Boileau.

I do not suppose that Allen will ever again experience a moment—it was only one moment—of such unalloyed, such unexpected rapture as this. He cannot: such happiness can only come once—to a very young man. The earthly heaven recedes and disappears as one grows older. It was a momentary glimpse of paradise. But, the critic who opened the gates closed them again abruptly.

'As for your verses,' he said, with inconceivable cruelty, 'they are detestable. So far as I can judge, being a Frenchman, and not an Englishman, they are detestable.'

Allen dropped the papers out of his hand, and turned as pale as a girl who is 'going off,' while the verses fluttered helplessly to the floor.

'Allen!' Claire sprang forward and caught his hand. 'My father means—he does not mean——'

'I mean,' said her father firmly, 'that they are detestable. Now, Claire, my dear, play something that is soft and pleasant to take away the remembrance of those verses. So—so let me talk to this young poet if only to forget his rhymes.'

The young Apollo stood motionless, his verses lying down on the carpet. He would have shed tears had he been alone.

'Courage!' said his critic, 'courage, my son! Did you never before hear of a poet writing utterly detestable verses at eighteen? That is nothing; they all do it. Put the rubbish away and look at it, if you like, in three years time. That is my first advice; read this rigmarole make-believe no more or you will fall in love with it, and then it will stop your growth. Do you not know that to love any below the best of women is fatal to a poet? And as your mistress so your verse. Would you take your Muse from an English institution—*hein?*—a school for young ladies? Think no more about the verses. Are you brave?'

Certainly, at this moment he did not look brave, but the exact opposite, for the shock of hearing his verses called detestable was too much for his nerves, and he was trembling, as only a lad of extremely nervous and sensitive temperament can tremble at that age when one is still a boy, but with some of the instincts of a man. All his hopes were lying in those verses, and they were detestable.

'Come, Allen,' said Hector kindly, 'do not be cast down. Detestable as they are, they have the right ring, they have promise; they show that you will, some day, write good verses. Now, are you brave?'

'I could be if I thought my work would not always be'—here he choked—'detestable.'

'It will not, believe me. Be prepared, however, to meet with the disappointment which belongs to the career of every poet, even the worst of evils—for a poet—neglect. Yet you must persevere. Success will seem farther off than ever, yet you must persevere. Give up, first, what men most care for—wealth.'

'I do not desire money,' said Allen grandly.

'Then you will be more than a poet: you will be a philosopher. But sometimes money means—love, and to a poet love is a necessity.'

'Love?' Allen glanced involuntarily at Claire.

'Yes, but women love men who succeed; they only pity those who fail. It is sometimes the fate of a poet to succeed only when he has one foot in the grave. You may be solitary, but you must work; you may be laughed at by your friends, but you must go on working. In time you will have your reward. Yes, a great reward. The prizes of the world are all for those who can go on working.' Allen was silent. 'For the present read—read daily, and practise daily. To write verse easily is the first thing. That you will learn by practice. I command you to write every day something. And now, if you please, I will tell you, in order to encourage you, the story of a man who tried to be a poet and failed, because he left off trying.'

'I would rather,' said Allen, feebly smiling, 'hear the story of the man who succeeded.'

'You may read plenty of such stories in books. Listen, Claire, my child: if you can listen and make music at the same time, please to go on playing. If not, leave the piano and sit on your stool, and give your father both your hands.'

Claire sat at his feet and gave him her hands. She knew that he was going to tell them something about himself.

'The young man of whom I speak was a student—*il faisoit son droit*—he was studying law. In the same way began young Arouet and young Poquelin. It is not, my friend, that law produces poets, but that poets quickly abandon law. This young student, who never opened a law book, spent all his time in writing poetry. At the age when you were wandering in the woods, he wandered in the streets of Paris. It was nearly thirty years ago. He was a young man—there were then many such—who had learned the ideas of the Revolution, and saw that all was not finished, but, on the other hand, all was to begin again. You do not know yet what that means, but you will some day. This young man, while his fellow-students went to Auteuil and sang of lilacs and love, used to spend his time walking about the streets of Paris, and talking with the men who wear the blouse. It is through these men, you see, that revolutions are made. He wanted to find out what they think and what they want. If you talk to these men long enough they will tell you freely what they think. This young man began to write down the stories he heard in verse; he began to write songs for the people; he told them what they wanted, and how they were to work in order to get it—all in his songs. He would become—he—this young man—one of the Poets of Humanity. That was a noble ambition, was it not, Allen? Nothing less than a Poet of the People!'

'Ah!' cried Allen, kindling.

'When his verses were finished he took them to a publisher. Do I say one publisher? He offered them to all the publishers. Not one would take them. But he had a brother engaged in commerce. This good brother, though a plain bourgeois who abhorred the Revolution and desired order above all things, in order that he might become rich, gave him the money to publish his poems. The book was printed, it appeared——'

He was silent awhile.

'Then?' asked Allen.

'Nothing more, my friend, nothing more. It appeared from the statement of the publisher that nobody at all bought a single copy, nobody noticed the book.'

'Nobody at all? Oh, my poor father!' cried Claire.

'Nobody at all. The poet languished in absolute neglect. His very brother did not buy a copy. Yet I think that somebody must have read them, I do not know who. For, mark

this strange thing: it was in December of the year 1847 that these poems were published, and in February, 1848, the Revolution began. Yes, the Revolution. Now when it began, a coincidence happened. The people acted exactly as I in my verses had exhorted them to act. Yes; in those verses which nobody bought.'

'Oh!' said Allen.

'Yes, there was the spontaneous rising; there were the barricades; there was the street-fighting. I felt as I stood among the *ouvriers* on the Boulevard des Italiens, that every man in the crowd must have read my verses. My children, that was a proud moment. I was the Poet of Freedom!'

'And the books?' asked Allen.

'Behold another coincidence. The shop was pillaged; the people wanted materials for a barricade. They took the handiest, the books out of that publisher's shop. Books, if you get enough of them, make excellent barricades. The Revolution, in fact, devoured the whole edition of the very book, to which—I do not say—I do not know—to which, perhaps, it owed birth.'

'And not a single copy left?' said Claire.

'My daughter, there is not one. Nothing remains of that unknown volume, unless, indeed, the memory of the Revolution.'

Allen's eyes glowed.

'Oh!' he cried; 'to think that a poet could so move the world!'

'And a poet of twenty-one!' said Claire, gazing with pride upon her father. She knew that he had taken no ignoble part in the great revolutionary outbreak, but she had never suspected him of being its prime author.

'Only three years older than myself,' echoed Allen.

'It may have been,' said this Tyrtæus of Revolution, trying to suppress the external betrayal of pride, 'that this young man only caught the ideas of the workmen and the students, and echoed them——'

'No,' said Allen with decision—'no: the poet leads.'

'Oh, yes,' said Claire, 'the people always wait for their poet.'

They both spoke as if they knew all about it, and as if they were quite familiar with the ways of the people. We, who know more of our brethren, may admit that if the people do always wait for their poet, they wait with great patience—as much patience as the mother of the people waits for that Ship to come home which is going to bring fortune and happiness. They wait, in fact, so patiently, that they do not even talk about the advent of the poet.

'Yet,' said Hector, glowing with the memory of this unknown achievement, and still endeavouring at modesty, 'yet not one copy sold!'

'Some of the books must have been lent,' said Allen. 'I have read of books being passed round secretly from hand to hand; and the printers may have printed for themselves copies of which they told you nothing.'

'That may have been,' said M. Philipon. 'I had quite forgotten the printers. Why, they were red republicans to a man. Yes, that must be the explanation. That makes all clear.'

'I always knew, *mon père*,' said Claire, kissing his hand, 'that you were as clever as you are good, but I did not know that you were so glorious.'

Allen gazed upon him with admiration, amounting to worship.

'Oh!' he murmured, 'we have been your pupils all these years and we never suspected. Why, Sir Charles is proud because he failed for a hundred thousand pounds, and ruined hundreds of families. And you, who are not proud, have——'

He stopped abruptly, because it suddenly occurred to him that two or three parallels, all equally unlucky, might be followed out on these lines. As, for instance, that Sir Charles failed for a hundred thousand pounds, and the Revolution of 1848 failed for many hundred millions; or, that Sir Charles ruined families by the dozen, and the Revolution ruined families by the million, and so on; each one affording great matter of congratulation to the obscure and unknown but genuine author of the great movement.

'My little poems,' said Hector modestly, 'merely had the luck to precede the second convulsion which shook thrones and made priests tremble—that is all.'

'Your doing, your doing,' repeated Allen.

'My friend, I do not claim that honour. I only remark a simple coincidence. That is the story I wished to tell you. First, remark that in spite of the remarkable success of those verses I did not continue to write poetry. That was because from being an active director in modern history I had shortly to become a—a—what I am now. A mind, narrowed to so small a thing as the verb irregular, and to so contemptible a field as the intellect of Girl, cannot write poetry.'

'Your country—the world—has lost you,' said Allen.

'Yet my story should encourage you. One may not sell one's works, yet they may produce great, even wonderful results. Therefore, courage; and work. Put away that rubbish, and work. And it was a noble thought, was it not, to leave love and lilacs in the age when lilacs and love are most delightful, and to become the Poet of Humanity?'

The bright eyes of the man who should have been a great poet grew humid, and his musical voice trembled.

'Of Humanity!' Allen echoed, with glowing cheeks and brightened eyes.

CHAPTER X.

THE TEACHING OF ART.

ALLEN read no more verses to his guide; but he went on making them in obedience to his advice. If you wish to be a poet, you cannot, in fact, do better than make verses perpetually. It is only by the writing of poetry that one becomes a poet. This seems elementary, but it is not, because most people believe that a man is born a poet ready-made, and that verses drop from his pen like accounts in double entry from the pens of the less gifted. Besides writing rhyme, Allen read a great deal aloud to Claire and Will in the long winter evenings, while M. Philipon rolled his cigarettes, and watched the progress of the experiment. The brave Hector had a new interest in life since the commencement of the great Conspiracy. The ideas of his youth had returned to him; once more he felt himself a man among men. He was still, it is true, a teacher to young ladies; but he was more, he was much more. He was a man with power in reserve; he had still his trump card to play: because he had as yet told Claire only half of his great Thought. And by this time Will was also taken into partial confidence.

'I always thought it would come to this,' he said when Allen told him about the verses. 'I believe if you were offered a partnership in Brimage and Waring with ten thousand a year, or the chance of being an author with what even casual sovereigns you could make, you would take that chance.'

'Of course I would,' Allen replied. 'Why, Will, who would not? If you are a merchant, you live out your life for the sake of making money. Can that be compared with the life of an author—a poet—who shows the better life, who interprets the thoughts of the people?'

'I don't know much about the People,' said Will. 'If they had any thoughts they wouldn't want an interpreter, I take it. As for your fine contempt for money, it is very noble, old boy; but I should like to be rich. A rich man has respect and power. And why shouldn't he live the better life—eh?'

'I suppose he might, if he chose,' said Allen.

'I don't quite know what the better life is,' Will continued. 'I don't suppose it's lentils and cold water, with a hair shirt, and a cowhide for your own shoulders. Is it?'

'Of course not,' said Allen.

'In that case I see no reason why any one in Brimage and Waring's shouldn't lead it as well as you poets. I dare say lots of the fellows do, only we don't know. I say, Allen, what will the *mater* say?'

What indeed? Allen winced at the question, and shook his

head like Lord Burleigh, meaning an enormous quantity of expostulation, tears, and disappointment by that shake.

'Yes,' said Will, 'you've got all your work cut out for you there. I should like to see my father's face if I were to tell him that I was going to be a poet. Why, he has got five-and-twenty projects at least, besides those which doubled him up years ago, and he is only waiting till I have made some money to take it all away from me and begin again. He says I shall inherit a vast fortune.'

Both laughed irreverently, and it must be owned that Will interpreted the fifth commandment in a narrow sense. He honoured his father as much as he could, but that was not much.

'Of course if ever I do make money I shall take care not to lose it,' he went on. 'But to make money one must be in the City. Allen, old boy, I should like to say something, but I am afraid.'

'You cannot offend me, Will,' said Allen, 'not even if you were to call my poor verses detestable.'

'I shouldn't do that, certainly, because I should always see what you were driving at, and you couldn't aim at anything detestable. What I mean is—I sometimes think—well —' he hesitated a good deal, because this was really a very disagreeable thing to say; 'I mean—sometimes it seems—that this desire for glory may be a pretty selfish kind of thing. Not that you are selfish, Allen, only there is a heap of things in the world which are waiting to be done. Wouldn't it be better for every one to take his share of the work and do it, without caring about being praised while he is alive and remembered when he is dead? Let a man do his work as well as he can, and have done with it.'

Allen received this admonition meekly. He confessed that he did think very much indeed about fame; the crown of laurel seemed of all things the most desirable. He owned that it might be selfish, but that he greatly longed to distinguish himself.

'After all,' said Will, thinking, 'if you do have the admiration of the whole world when you have got one foot in the grave, how are you to enjoy it? You don't know it when a person a thousand miles off is reading your verses and admiring; you don't feel it if that person is laughing or crying over you. How much better off are you than the City man whom nobody knows?'

'You have the consciousness of your life's work,' said Allen, with grandeur.

'You don't know,' Will went on, 'how often you are read and by whom. To be sure, your portrait will be in the photograph shops, between the ballet girls and the Beauties. That will be grand. And when you die your fame will do you no good.'

'How do you know that?' asked Allen sharply.

'Should it, more than the memory of a good life? Never mind, Allen, you will be a poet. But you must not give up the City. You can go on working all day in an office and writing every evening. You know we are going to have great chances and get partnerships some day and be rich—but I don't know how or when. I don't think, so far as I know, that there has ever been yet a City merchant who was a poet—Rogers, to be sure; but he was only a banker. You shall be that phenomenon, the first great wealthy merchant who ever wrote poems.'

Allen laughed. A City merchant he felt very sure he should never be. How long he should have to continue a City clerk was another question, for the irksomeness of the work became every day more intolerable to him, and the drudgery more aimless. I believe that there is no torture worse than that of setting men to do work which means nothing. In military prisons they used—perhaps they do it still—to make the prisoners carry heavy shot from one place to another place and then back again—a punishment which presently brings on either softening of the brain or an irrepressible desire to kill some one. When one thinks of the City clerk—the mechanical clerk—who copies and enters and adds up all the day long, one is reminded of the prisoners who carry the shot. The reader of Lemprière, or any other person of classical tastes, may also consider the labours of Sisyphus. Allen felt all day long like the man with the heavy shot. His labours led to nothing and were of no importance to him. He would have been walking in the Forest alone, or reading with Claire, or meditating some great design. His mind was filled with books. As yet he was able to give his daily work sufficient attention, but he felt as if the burden was every day becoming greater.

Now I suppose that no one will believe—a thing, however, perfectly true—that neither of these lads had ever been to a theatre, or a picture gallery, or a museum, or a concert, or an opera, or a collection of Art of any kind. To realise the possibility of such destitution you have to comprehend the East End, which is, to those of us who live in the West, absolutely incomprehensible. It is like a theological dogma: it is beyond man's reason. You have also to understand how much out of the way is this village where the boys lived. It is on the Great Eastern Railway, to begin with, which isolates and cuts it off from the cultured West; and it is five miles from a station. Why, these boys never went anywhere except to and from their school until they left it. Then they went to Liverpool Street, and from that terminus to Great St. Simon Apostle. They saw nothing. I doubt if they had ever seen St. Paul's—I am sure they had not seen Westminster Abbey.

One day Hector, thinking over his great conspiracy and its

progress, suddenly sprang from his chair with a bound, and with a loud cry as of one who has a swift and sudden pain.

'Claire!' he cried, 'I have forgotten——'

'What have you forgotten, papa?'

'I have forgotten—the Theatre.'

'Forgotten the Theatre?' she repeated, for the words meant nothing at all to her.

'Heaven forgive me! I have forgotten—I—a Parisian—have forgotten the Drama! Can it be possible? This it is to have been thirty years in exile. My daughter, the education of a poet must include a knowledge of the stage, and I had overlooked it.'

'Surely it is not too late.'

'No; we must, however, lose no time. And there are pictures, music, sculpture, architecture—there is the whole world of Art. Good heavens! we must indeed lose no time.'

On the following Saturday the young men stayed in town and met Claire and her father in the evening. They all went together to the pit, where one sees best and pays least. The joy of children at a pantomime is supposed to be a pleasant sight for older eyes: yet no children at any pantomime ever fell into a greater rapture than did these two lads of eighteen—an age when many boys are sated with such sights—and the girl who sat between them. They were carried out of themselves: they were no longer in a theatre, hot, close, and crowded: they were in the forest, on the sea, in palaces among great nobles. Fortunately it was a first night; the house was quite full; the piece was so sweet and poetical that, though it pleased the critical audience of the first performance and was full of poetry and pathos, and tears and laughter, it failed to run. The author was called, and came to the front and bowed amid the acclamation of the house. Allen for his part stood up to shout.

They came away in a dream, Claire's eyes still wet with the tears of the third act—they ought to have taken sheets with them instead of pocket-handkerchiefs, so moving was the situation.

The walk to the station, however, restored them. Will became critical about the acting, Allen about the story. One, you observe, was himself born to be a maker, the other to be a recipient of the things made. The poet gives as well as makes, the rest of us only receive: we criticise these gifts, we venture to look into the mouth of the fairest gift-horse.

'But a story acted,' said Will, 'is ten times better than a story told.'

'And there cannot be in the whole world,' said Allen with a sigh, 'a happier man to-night than the author of the piece.'

'There will be one man as happy some day,' Claire whispered. 'Do you know who, Allen?'

He blushed. Yes, to sit in a theatre to see your own noble thoughts nobly rendered ; to witness the faces of a large audience all moved by the same emotions ; to say to yourself, *ipse feci*—it is my handiwork ; this is indeed solid and substantial reward. The time is coming again when the best genius of England will be drawn back to the stage, and the writing of dramas will be the chosen life's-work of the future Thackeray. Allen knew what Claire meant. It would be when he himself should so stand before a crowded House and hear those plaudits ; but he remembered, prudently, that first he must produce a piece as worthy of applause. He must work ; he must read ; he must meditate.

Mrs. Engledew about this time became uneasy about her boy. It was not only that he thought so much of books and so little of the City, but that his Saturdays seemed now devoted, afternoon and evening alike, to the pursuit of pleasure, which to her was known only as 'sight-seeing.' What possible use or delight could it be for a boy to gape in picture-galleries? Yet that was what her son was doing. Every Saturday afternoon he spent in this manner, accompanied by Will, and sometimes by Claire. They took kindly to the world of Art ; it was a new and a wonderful thing to wander among the treasures of the National Gallery. Their minds became filled with new thoughts and new images. Will, for his part, speedily assumed a critical attitude, and pronounced judgment on the execution of the work ; Allen and Claire considered chiefly the conception and the thought of it.

Everybody ought, we know, every day to hear a piece of good music, to see a good picture, and to read a good poem ; he ought, also, to eat a good dinner, to drink a good bottle of wine, to see a good play, listen to a good song, dance a good dance, flirt with a pretty girl—this must never be neglected because, above all things, it keeps the heart young—and tell a good story. We waste our lives in neglecting this golden rule. Titus once burst into tears because he had wasted a day in leaving out one or other of these precepts—he had forgotten to tell a good story ; but sometimes we leave them all out. Look to it, brothers. These unhappy young men had to waste six days out of the seven. On the seventh they made up as much as possible, manifesting a Judaic objection to work beyond what is necessary. They persevered ; they rested on the seventh day and studied Art. They got to know all the collections, all the galleries ; they knew the masters in every school. Then they haunted the museums, until they were able to go through the Egyptian and Greek rooms without yawning. They wandered among the great buildings of London ; they went to concerts and theatres ; they visited every show in London during this time.

If there had been an æsthetic or artistic circle in their village they would all three have become self-conscious prigs ;

but there was none. They were left entirely to themselves, and they remained humble, though they were the three most remarkable young people in the east of London. Claire, as wise and accomplished as Lady Jane Grey, continued to teach the rudiments of knowledge, and was patronised by the older governesses. The young men wended their way daily to the place of business, but talked, going and coming, of things which raise the soul. The aristocracy of the village had ceased to take their old interest in them. Who, among an illustrious company of eminent bankrupts, regardeth a clerk? But more and more Allen's mind was filled with the thoughts and dreams which come in crowds to the brain of the boy of books. He should have been sent to Oxford or Cambridge, where he might have taken a fellowship, and in fulness of time drifted back to London, and so, by pleasant paths and among the younger scholars, have fallen into the better kind of authorship or journalism. But that could not be. He would have, somehow, to make his own way by rude and thorny paths. And he began to inquire, in a tentative fashion, how a man may best besiege that treasure-house of glory and of wealth which is guarded by the heroic band of publishers and editors. Of course, like every young man, he looked upon a book as a copious fountain brimming over with glory. And though as yet he took little thought about money, he had no doubt that every book brought in large sums to the fortunate writer. Some day, perhaps, among the lists in that 'special' column reserved for new works his own name would be found. He read the special column every morning, and used to wonder how it would feel to see your own name there. But no one in the office seemed to know anything about publishing, or books either.

'We are going on well, Claire,' said her father. 'Our poet knows books, and literature, and art. There are three things which remain for him to know. Two of them must be left for awhile. We cannot give him time and money for travel; we cannot take him into the *salons* of great ladies; but we can, my dear, introduce him to the People.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE.

'FORTUNATELY, there is nowhere,' said the philosopher, 'a more excellent situation for the study of the People, than that which lies almost close to our hand. In the east of London we have the People pure and unmixed. It is better, even, than the Faubourg St. Antoine. Here there are two millions of the people all living together; there is hardly a single gentleman,

or a rich man, or an artist, or a man of taste, unless it is a Priest or Minister here and there, among them all. The English are a truly wonderful nation. What other country can show a city of two million—larger than all Paris—given over entirely to the *ouvrier?* To say that they have no amusements is to say that they are English. No theatres, no place to dance, no place for music, no gardens, no cafés—nothing. Or, yes, there are the churches. If it were not for the churches, we should have presented before us a unique example of people developed without control, and according to the laws of their creation.'

'I think the working men do not go to church,' said Claire.

'Is that the case?' said her father, doubtfully. 'I thought all English people went to church twice every Sunday. If, however, they do not, it is fortunate for the observer. Allen's business is arranged for him. It is a truly magnificent opportunity. He will discover the natural Englishman—two millions of him—the working man of England as he is, without education, knowledge, government, or religion. Yet they give him the vote; they make him elector; they make him their master.'

'Allen need not go to Whitechapel to see working men,' said Claire coldly, because she saw no necessity for the study of the People. 'He may go to High Beech in Epping Forest on Sundays. I believe he will find them there.'

'Ah! The man who drinks beer and catches his friends by the arm; he who pushes his hat to the back of his head and opens his mouth; the man who tears the branches from the trees, and would pull the hawthorns up by the roots if he were strong enough. Yes, I have seen that man; but he is not the People, Claire.'

Claire smiled. She did not believe in the People, either with a capital letter or without.

'I shall begin,' he said, the map of London before him, and a ruler and a red lead pencil in his hand, 'with dividing the East into districts. We will take each district in turns; we will consecrate Saturday afternoon and Sunday afternoon to our exploration of the People: thus we shall be among them twice a week. I estimate, Claire, that there will be one thousand five hundred miles of streets to be walked over. If we take ten miles a day, we shall accomplish the task in a hundred and fifty days, which will be exactly a year and a half. Expect, therefore, in a year and a half that Allen will have a complete knowledge of the People.'

That same evening he partly opened his mind to Allen on the subject, keeping always something behind, like a true conspirator.

'My disciple,' he said, 'for three years and more you have followed my counsels and been guided by me. Are you satisfied, so far?'

'Quite,' said Allen. 'You have taught me more, far more, than I ever expected to learn—more than I had the least right to expect.'

'You have, my son, learned to write. Claire tells me your verses are no longer detestable but admirable. You have read a great quantity of books; you have begun to form a style of your own.'

Allen blushed with pleasure. He was still a very young man, though between eighteen and twenty-one there is a great space, almost a gulf; but still he blushed when he was praised.

'You have received,' continued the Sage with solemnity, 'a preparation for your work which ought to fit you for it. A poet should know the Voice of nature. You were brought up in the solitudes among the trees and the silence of the forest. A poet should know the great works of other poets. You have read the best of French and English poets. A poet should show himself ready to struggle against adverse circumstances. You have served your apprenticeship in being forced to spend your days in a City office. A poet should know the Voice of Art. You have learned to recognise that Voice, Allen; your education is complete, except one thing.'

'What is that?' he asked.

'You have not yet learned to know the Voice of the People.'

'Oh!' said Will, who was also present. But he said no more, and therefore we are quite free to guess what he meant; but I think he remembered a certain saying of M. Philipon's about Humanity.

'I was myself,' Hector continued, 'the poet of Humanity. What else a poet exists for I know not, unless to sing of love, which is always pleasant. Go among the people. Read their heart. Study them. Make friends among them. Listen till you hear their Voice.'

Allen nodded his head thoughtfully.

'When you know them well, when your heart beats with them, you will no longer care to be a poet of love; you will be a poet of life.'

'Of life?' echoed Will. 'Is that quite the same thing as to be the Poet of the People?'

'See,' continued M. Philipon without replying, 'here is the map of great London. Here are the great contiguous cities, the beautiful, picturesque, and unknown of Whitechapel, Stepney, Bow, Stratford, Old Ford, Clapton, Bethnal Green, Shadwell, and Wapping. They are all of them cities of the People. They are cities of the industrious poor; they are cities of the ignorant. If their country is great they know nothing of her greatness, because nobody teaches them. You English are so proud in your greatness that you do not think it worth your while to teach your own people how great they are.

If the country is rich and glorious, they see nothing of the wealth or the glory. If it is full of Art and treasures it matters nothing to them; they know nothing of Art, they are left to find out Art and everything else by themselves. They are left entirely to themselves; they are the People in naked simplicity; a more naked simplicity does not exist. It is wonderful; it is most wonderful.'

He paused and went on with his ruler and his square.

'Here, Allen, you must wander till you know the People. I have marked your country out into districts. The poet must gather materials for his song; he must be inspired by divine indignation; he must be angry. Every Saturday you must take one of my districts and walk over it slowly, and make your observations. Every Sunday, also, you must walk over; and in this way, in a year and a half, you will have seen the whole. Then, Allen, and not till then, your education will be complete. Your brain will be full, your hand will be ready, when the inspiration comes.'

Allen accepted the map and considered it. His commission was a roving one: he was to wander among streets, and he was to observe, to watch, to see what there was to be seen. He was, in short, to learn the People. Simple directions these. He felt like Columbus setting forth on a voyage of discovery. One rule only: keep steering west.

'Come, Allen,' said Will next Saturday, 'let us begin the pilgrimage.'

Of course, Will went with him. He was not as yet greatly interested in the People, but he wanted to see what would happen.

They took one of the districts, almost at hap-hazard, and they walked up and down its streets for the whole afternoon, looking about them.

In the evening they reported, as the sum of their observations, that an Irishman under the influence of drink had accosted them, and cursed the Government of the country, from the Queen to the office-boy; that he had next produced a knife, which, he said, had already murdered a great many landlords, and threatened to stick it into them. No other adventure had happened to them. The streets, they remarked, were almost deserted, except for the children who played in the gutters and made boats, carts, houses, weapons, armour, out of broken bottles, bits of paper, cabbage stalks, fish bones, scraps of wood, and such things. The houses were all exactly the same, and seemed the result of a combination among the builders to be as mean as they could for the money. Now and then they came upon a chapel. There were no trees, no gardens, no green things at all; there were not many clean blinds.

'The first day, Allen,' said Will, 'hasn't brought us much nearer the People. Listen!'

They were in a narrow street of small houses, dirty and ill-kept. Will stood still and held up a finger of attention.

'I hear nothing,' said Allen.

'Nor I. Then let us go home and report that we have not yet heard that Voice.'

The next day being Sunday, they made another attempt. Their district included Whitechapel Road, and there was preaching going on.

'Here,' said Will, 'there seems a good deal of Voice, and it has got jaws of brass and lungs of cast-iron. Let us listen with all our might.'

One man was standing in the centre of a ring, and proving quite conclusively that there was no soul, no heaven, no after-life, no Providence, no Creator, no hope, no right, no wrong, no rule of life, no reason for anything but self-preservation.

'He looks,' said Will, 'as if he hadn't many opportunities in early life of getting to the bottom of things. Do you think his is the Voice?'

His audience listened to him with languid interest. They had heard the whole thing before, over and over again. They were, in fact, bored with a problem which had nothing to do, they were now persuaded, with themselves. But it wanted more than a quarter of an hour to the opening of the public-houses.

Another stump-orator, also with his little circle, was loudly demonstrating that the Government of this country, and of all other countries, exists only for the purpose of oppressing the people and of making rich men richer. There could be no happiness, this philosopher maintained, until the abolition of all governments was finally, and once for all, carried out. He was listened to by his group with the same languid interest. The East-End people have no concern in governments. No one governs them. But they waited for the opening of the public-houses.

'I wonder,' said Will, 'if this is the Voice.'

In the middle of the next group was a man vehemently gesticulating, and loudly calling upon his hearers to turn away from their wickedness and their filthy sin, and to repent. His hearers stood round him quite as much unmoved by this as by the other voices. It yet wanted a quarter to one, when the doors would be opened.

Another man preached temperance, and drew the usual appalling pictures of misery and of money wasted which should have been money saved, and of crime, and death, and disgrace, through drink.

'This,' said Will, 'seems the most sensible voice of the lot.'

The workmen on the pavement had heard it all before; they knew what was coming; they stood still and listened, but paid no heed. They only smoked their pipes and remarked to each other that it was ten minutes to one.

In the side streets the young children were playing, but no grown persons were visible at all. And the houses in this district were more squalid than any they had seen before.

'There is no doubt,' said Will, 'that we have got to the lowest level here—the hard pan, as the Americans say. Do you feel yet at all like getting a firm grip of the People, Allen?'

Allen shook his head.

They also made the discovery—made by many before them—that all the well-dressed people go to church or chapel, and that those who are not well-dressed stay away. Therefore it would seem at first as if religion begins with a frock-coat, and the man in the workman's jacket does not feel any necessity for religion. This is a most truly wonderful outcome of civilisation. There seems no active hostility to church or chapel; religion appears to most of the people a very harmless thing, but they don't want it for themselves. And if a man lacks the religious sense, how shall another man restore it to him? Perhaps, when one lives for ever in a great crowd, one's own personality is destroyed, and each man thinks only of the crowd.

Another day their journey took them among rows of streets where the houses were as monotonous, but not so mean; as ugly, but not so squalid; they had white curtains, and every house boasted something ornamental, such as a big Bible, or a desk, or a vase with artificial flowers, and most of the streets terminated with the railings of a vast great cemetery, crowded with stones, which marked for posterity—who never go to read these stones, and indeed cannot because they are railed off—the names of the obscure and long-forgotten dead.

'If it is dreadful to live here, it must be more than dreadful to be buried here,' said Will. 'Come away, Allen. Let us think of Waltham Abbey or old Chingford Church.'

Another day their district included Limehouse and the East India Road, and they remarked the manners and customs of the sailors, especially the foreign sailors. Also they were privileged in witnessing a little drama, got up, perhaps, for their benefit. It was a drama for two, the principal part being taken by a Maltese sailor, and the second part by a Greek. The play opened with two men gambling, quietly sitting on the pavement. Naturally one was a winner and the other a loser. The latter—who, of course, was the Maltese—lost his money first, and his temper next, and his self-control last. Then he sprang to his feet, and with flashing eyes and wild gesture accused the Greek of cheating—in fact they were both cheating, but the Greek cheated best—and demanded his money back. The other rose too, and in calm and mocking tones gave him to understand that the money was safe in his own pocket and would remain there. Whereupon the Maltese drew a knife—a long, glittering knife—and swiftly plunged it into the body of that Greek, who

fell with a yell, and two policemen bore down upon the Maltese, and they carried the Greek to the Foreign Sailors' Home and the Maltese to the House of Repentance and Little Ease, and the drama was finished.

There were a good many spectators of this one-act tragedy, and quite a little crowd of women, who seemed acquainted with sailors and their ways, and took boundless interest in a fight and a stabbing. They commented on the performance very much as if the place was the Royal Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, and they were in the gallery. They lamented that so fine a tableau as the fallen Greek and the Maltese with the blood-dripping knife in his hand had not been led up to with a more artistic finish. There should have been more dialogue; there should have been more of a fight. The Greek should have had his knife as well.

It was too sudden, too soon over; yet delightful while it lasted. So in the amphitheatre talked the women of Rome, when some gallant young prisoner, who ought to have made play for them for half an hour, was done to death at once and with a single stroke of the tiger's claw. Too sudden. They love fighting, these women; they long for more. They would restore the bull-fight: they would throw the enemies of their country to the lions; they would arm them to fight against each other in the arena. When they had discussed the fight, the ladies proceeded to speculate on the trial, the verdict, and the sentence. Should the Greek die—but what a thousand pities that a man can no longer go in public, amid the acclamations of his friends, to his own hanging!

'I wonder,' said Will, 'if this is the Heart of the people?'

They reported discouragement.

'Go on,' said Hector, 'you will find, some time or other, what you are looking for. Go on.'

He meant that Allen would find what he wished him to find. They went on; they pursued that tramp week after week, in fine weather and foul, till the monotony of the streets seemed intolerable.

'They are brought up in this,' said Will one day, 'they don't feel it as we do, who have had the Forest. Do you begin to understand how they must look on life? Do you begin to see why they have no religion?'

'What do you mean, Will?'

'I mean,' said Will, 'that without some sense of beautiful things, faith must be impossible. What beautiful things can be imagined in these horrible streets?'

It was Sunday afternoon; they were passing a little chapel, mean and ugly. There was a children's service, or school, going on, and, as if in answer to Will's question, the fresh voices of the little ones sang as they passed, 'There is a happy land, far, far away.'

'Oh!' cried Will, looking round him, 'what sort of happiness, what kind of land, can they expect?'

But the eyes of his companion filled with tears.

'We have been everywhere,' said Will that night to the philosopher; 'we have tramped through Hoxton and Hackney, Whitechapel and Stepney; we know Wapping, Shadwell, and Limehouse; we have seen the big breweries and the docks, and the gasworks, and the cemeteries. We have seen the People, but we cannot find out their heart and we cannot hear their Voice.'

'And you, Allen, can you not hear the Voice of the people?'

'No; I am farther than ever from finding out their heart or their Voice.'

'Often,' said Hector, 'in looking for one thing, we find another. Do not forget what you have seen.'

They did not yet give in; they had hitherto gone only about the streets, they would go to places where the people meet together. They found there were two or three music-halls, half-a-dozen debating societies, and certain radical clubs.

At the music-halls they heard songs so unspeakably vulgar, so inexpressibly detestable, that they ignorantly concluded they were a *spécialité* of the East End. Alas! even in the more æsthetic West, there is a demand for similar musical effects. The atmosphere of the halls was laden with tobacco, gas, and foul air. 'Arry was there, with Alf and George, and all their friends. They are the clubs of the lower clerkdom, the *prés aux clercs*.

At the debating-club they heard a most amazing quantity of talk, but no one seemed to have taken any trouble to master his facts; no one knew anything. This ignorance to these mistaken young men also appeared a *spécialité* of the East End. But then they had never attended the debates in the House.

In the chapels they heard everywhere the same exhortations and expressions, in the same words, addressed to decent people in black coats, who looked as if they were passing on the discourse to some one else, because it did not concern themselves.

They went to the public-houses and called for glasses of beer, and they listened for the Voice there. They heard a voice, to be sure, a thick, hoarse voice, full of ugly words, and certainly not a heavenly voice. Then befell Allen something of the feeling which possessed Dante when he gazed upon the souls of the hapless lost. He became haunted by crowds of faces, processions of faces, an ocean of faces. When he slept at night these faces gazed upon him; when he walked, or read, or sat at work, these faces were always looking upon him. There were millions of them—two millions, as nearly as he could count—and he seemed to know them all. They were all different, yet all alike in one respect, that they were all faces which lacked something. There was no happiness in them;

they were dull, they had no sunshine in them ; they bore no secret fountains of joy beneath them, they wanted hope. They were ignorant faces. As Allen looked on them he was seized with terror, for he saw before him the whole of East London—the mighty City, the neglected City, the joyless City, the City of the baser sort, and he trembled. If the vision of the multitudinous face, this troubled and turbid ocean of heavy brows and dull, disappointed eyes, had continued, I think the young man would have gone mad ; but presently there came relief when that thing happened to him, which has also happened to Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Hood, and many others. Out of the faces, out of the multitudes which throng the thoroughfares of the Joyless City like ants upon an anthill, there presently began to detach themselves, by ones and twos, singly or in little groups, separate figures ; while he looked upon them the background of faces disappeared. These figures, however, never left him, day after day, but continued shadows impalpable, yet plain to behold, and acted and talked before him. He listened and looked until he knew them, knew their very thoughts, knew why they acted and what they would do next ; knew their manner of speech, their hopes, and their anxieties, their very prejudices ; man and woman they stood before him, and bared their souls, and were not ashamed. They were unlovely ; some of them were like monstrous figments created by a fantastic artist, so hideous were they ; but these were the old ; some among the young were beautiful, but it seemed as if while he looked upon them, invisible fingers were taking the beauty out of their faces and the sweetness out of their eyes.

There were young girls among them, quite a group of young girls ; and one came forth timidly and said, 'Take me. I will tell you all that is in my heart, all that I do, all that I hope, all that I know ; I am yours altogether.' He followed and watched this girl among her companions ; she was in the work-room, walking with other girls on Sundays ; she was quite young and full of vague hopes, but she knew nothing. She had her chapel on Sunday ; and she had her lover. She played out her little story—a poor and pitiful one—to the very end, and presently that story was finished and she vanished, falling back into the crowd, and was no more seen, though Allen looked everywhere for her among the most miserable of her sex. There were children, heaps of children ; presently one of these children came out and held up its arms, and became his property ; and he listened to its story as he walked with it, with saddened heart ; and presently this child, too, finished its tale and fell back and was lost in the great ocean of its fellows.

There were mothers and wives—thousands of them. Presently one came to him, her baby in her arms, and told her tale, which made his fingers to clench and his teeth to grind together.

Then she fell back weeping, and was lost among the waves of faces around her. And another; and another; and another.

Always sadness, always disappointment, always unhappiness; was there then no gladness in this great City?

There were lovers—thousands of lovers, and presently a pair came out, a workgirl and a workman; he listened to their tale and understood that there is one thing always which remains to us, even in meanness and monotony, which is love.

As the visions grew, as the puppets of his fancy became real, so the young man's daily task in the City became more intolerable, and he longed, like a prisoner, for the hour of his deliverance. For he could now think of nothing but the figures which moved perpetually before him, acting and talking before him as if he had no will in the matter, and as if the drama of their lives was not the creation of his own brain.

You who have never been possessed by such phantoms, you who have never made acquaintance with any but men and women of the flesh, cannot understand the strength of such possession. For they do not leave the brain in any waking hour; they are always present, always acting and talking, always in some way carrying on their lives independently of your own will; they know nothing of time or space; the longer they stay with you the better you know them. Some of the men become your friends: you fall in love with some of the girls. Some of them you hate: you weep over the misfortunes of some, you rejoice with their joy. Yet one thing seems strange, that there is in every one of them something of yourself. They are your own children; even in unlikeness they are like you. These phantoms come only to a few; and of these few there are not many, indeed, who can describe in fitting terms what they have seen. For the phantoms pay no more respect to dramatic effect, to grouping, to situation, than the man and woman in real life. They act exactly in the same way. Every one of them wants for himself all the joy and happiness that can be crowded into the twenty-four hours of the day; every one desires for himself love, ease, pleasantness, sunshine, long life, and health. Now of all these things there is not enough to go round, by a great deal, and people have hardly as yet begun to manufacture more.

'Allen, my son,' said the Philosopher, 'have you, then, found at last the Voice of the People?'

'I do not know,' he replied; 'I must think.'

'The people have no voice,' said Will bluntly. 'They want to be taught how to speak; they want the power of speech, and they want—not a poet—but a leader.'

'You are right, Will,' said Hector.

'They want,' he repeated, looking at Allen, 'a leader who

shall tell them what else they want, and what they must ask for. As for their Voice——' He stopped abruptly.

'Oh!' cried Claire, 'do not vex yourself longer about their Voice, Allen. My father means that the heart of the people is your own heart, when you know them. Their Voice is your own voice, when you have learned them.'

'My daughter,' said Hector, kissing her forehead, 'you have rightly interpreted. Listen, Allen, to your own Voice. Your education, my son, is now complete.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE GREAT CONSPIRACY.

'TELL me, father,' said Claire, 'now that Allen's education is complete, the other part of your great conspiracy—that is, if I may be told.'

'You shall be told, my daughter.' Her father assumed his most important manner. 'When I informed you, my child, that Allen should be a poet, I meant more than what you understood. For such a poet as I designed there is a broader future open, a more glorious ambition.'

'Can there be a more noble ambition than to become a poet?'

'The greatest thing of all, my daughter, is to lead the world. There are no longer any kings; but there are dictators. It is the same thing, but with changed name. Every man who aspires to lead mankind must be ready to assume the purple, if he succeed.'

Claire began to comprehend; but she interrupted not.

'I myself,' her father went on, 'have made my humble attempt. But for the destruction of my poems I might now be—Gambetta. I failed. Yet to have endeavoured makes all the life illustrious.' He paused, thinking of the barricades and of himself a lad of twenty-one, brandishing a gun and shouting for the Republic, which was going to do so much for the world and has done so little. 'It was necessary,' he went on, 'that Allen should be a poet first, as I was. The rest will follow. He knows the people; he knows all that I can teach him. When the moment arrives he will cease to be a poet, and will become a prophet. He will spring to his feet and speak. He will be the leader, dictator, rex, imperator, *servus servorum*—all that there is of most magnificent.'

Claire shook her head and smiled.

'Hitherto,' her father continued, 'in speaking of leaders we have meant generals and politicians. I suppose there must continue to be generals and politicians. But the people will no

longer be led by them. I have made up my mind that the people are concerned with one thing only.'

'What is that thing?' asked Claire.

'Happiness, my daughter. The leader of the future, the next dictator, will be the man who will teach the world how to be happy. Politics, forms of government, are nothing. That form of government, that ministry which interferes with the people's happiness must be abolished. Let it vanish!' He swept the air with a wide and comprehensive gesture, at which kings might have trembled. 'Everywhere,' he went on, 'men want to be happy. They cannot. Why? They do not know how. None of their leaders can teach them. A man must be a poet before he can find out for them.'

Claire nodded and smiled again.

'Allen shall be such a leader as the world has never seen. There have been many leaders, but they have failed; partly because they were themselves led by selfish motives; partly because they knew not whither they would lead the people; partly because they thought that a government can do for the people what they must do for themselves. They look, poor fools, to the Government, and the Government looks to them. "Give us," they say, "what we want." "Tell us," the Government replies, "what you do want." Alas! they do not know. And as the leader, so the people. They are ignorant, they are deaf, they are dumb, they cannot think, they suffer, and know not why. They are waiting for the man who will tell them what they want. And, my dear, directly the people find out that, you may be sure that they will have it, whether the Government wish it, or whether they do not.'

'It seems a great dream,' said Claire. But still as she spoke and as she listened a strange and subtle smile lingered upon her face.

'It is a great dream; it is more than a dream; it is prophecy. Allen is already a poet, and shall shortly be a prophet.'

A vision arose before the girl's mind of a great tall figure clothed in a single robe, with long lean limbs, and one finger pointing upwards. In the right hand was a stick. It was the figure of Elijah as represented in some book of her infancy. She tried to see the features of Allen in this garb, but she failed.

'He must have courage; he must have great courage; he must not be afraid of rough crowds, of hard words; he must fight, if need be. Yet, *ce n'est que le premier pas*, his friends will push him on. As yet, he waits for inspiration. The moment will come, doubt it not. All will go well, Claire; all will go well with my disciple.'

As he spoke the rapture of his great Thought seized him again; but this time he spoke slowly, and with eyes which saw, looking out into the night, a vision.

'I behold,' he said, 'one who comes. He is greater than Voltaire; he is greater than Shakespeare; he is the greatest of all who have taught or led the people. He teaches them how to make life happy. No one has taught mankind that lesson yet. Allen will do it. They shall require of the Government nothing but order and justice: they will rule for themselves their wages and their work and their holidays. They will find happiness for themselves. There shall be no more hunger, no more misery, no more cruelty; there shall be enough happiness for all. To the new Humanity there shall be no talk of Government. The real leader shall be he who can make them happy. Once more, my daughter, this idea of France, the Mother of all ideas, shall be proclaimed. But in this great Revolution before us we shall learn by old and sad experience. There shall be no bloodshed, because all men will work with us when they understand that we are at last fulfilling the destiny of man, which is to be happy; else why were we born?

'As for poets,' he went on, 'they are nothing. They are as plentiful as blackberries. Do you think I would have taken all this trouble to produce a poet? No, it was a nobler thought. I would produce a leader.'

'Do you think, *mon père*,' said Claire, with another subtle smile, 'that Allen will become—what you hope?'

'I think he will,' replied her father. 'I have watched him with sympathy. He is gentle, he is ready, he is full of generous sentiments—*enfin*, he is a poet who has been taught by me.'

'And you believe that he will rise and lead the people?'

Hector had the faith in woman's wit which all Frenchmen entertain. He looked anxiously at his daughter.

'Tell me, Claire,' he said, 'what you mean.'

'I mean, papa,' she replied, 'that there are two boys, and that you have only thought of one. There is a strong boy, and there is a weak boy. If one is to be a leader, it will be the strong and not the weak.'

'And Allen?'

'Allen, *mon père*,' she replied with just half a little laugh, 'is so weak that he is even led—by me.'

Then her father's face cleared.

'*Allons! allons!*' he said, with a cheerful light in his eye and in the most musical note of his voice, 'all is for the best. Yes: it is a beautiful world. The young poet is led by you, is he? Women lead the world. I keep my hopes.'

CHAPTER XIII.

THREE PROPOSALS.

When the three young men arrived at the age of twenty-one things began to happen. If things happen at twenty-one they are almost always good things. If 'anything happens' at sixty, it is generally followed by a procession in black. Fortune is a woman, and may therefore only be wooed by the young and comely.

The first thing to happen was that Tommy's uncle behaved as an uncle should—he admitted his nephew to a Share. 'It will now be expected of me,' said Tommy, 'to leave this deserted hole and live in chambers.'

He had developed aristocratic leanings. He had long since discovered the West End and club-land; he used to go there and watch the members walk up and down the steps of their palaces; he used to let his imagination loose over the delicious wickedness that he imagined to be going on within them—the gambling, card-playing, champagne-drinking, and bacchanalian revels which, as everybody knows, make Pall Mall horrible by day and night for quiet people. He ardently desired to be admitted into this fellowship. The first step must be, certainly, to migrate into fashionable quarters.

The other two remained still in clerkery. But they were advanced; they had been discovered; they now drew substantial pay and did responsible work—young men who know foreign languages are not so plentiful in the City, they command a price. This increase of income brought plenty and comfort to two houses in the village.

'My son,' said Mr. Massey, who was always sanguine, 'will do well; he will go farther even than his father. He may even rival you, Colliber.'

Of course the fiction of glory was still maintained.

'A clear head and a sagacious eye,' said Sir Charles. 'The young man will be a credit to us, no doubt. I hope, Massey, for your sake, that he may rival any of us—any of us.'

'He certainly will,' said Mr. Colliber, grimly, 'if he takes up with any of his father's projects.'

Mr. Massey was not offended, because he believed in his projects. 'The boy might do worse,' he said, 'he might do worse.'

It was somewhere about this time, too, that Claire became conscious of a change in the behaviour of the young men. The old *camaraderie* disappeared; they no longer treated her quite as an equal; little by little they began to observe a respect and deference towards her quite unknown in the old days. Olinthus resumed his visits and even brought gifts. Allen seemed to

think that her opinion was worth asking on the only subjects he cared to talk about. Will paid her on every occasion the *petits soins* which girls like.

Perhaps she would not have wondered had she realised the change which a few years had accomplished in herself. She was now eighteen years of age, and at least three inches taller than her father. She had the sloping shoulders of a Frenchwoman, with the sweet face, delicately coloured, not pale, of an English girl. Her hair was black like the hair of a Parisienne; her eyes preserved the deep, full, limpid blue which seems to belong to English eyes; her voice was low and full like her father's: her features were as sharp and clear-cut as his; the grace of her walk, the little quicknesses of gesture, the delicacy of her fingers, were altogether French. No one but a Frenchwoman could dress so beautifully with materials so cheap and on an allowance so exiguous.

It was no wonder that the young men fell in love with her. The old, who are even more ready to appreciate beauty than the young, were of course in love with her. Sir Charles made her pretty compliments, and told her how he had received a great many most beautiful young ladies at his Mansion House balls, but none so beautiful as herself. Even Mr. Colliber, who was believed to have no eyes for anything but the price lists, congratulated her father on the girl's beauty and wished himself forty years younger. The lads would have been insensate logs had they not fallen in love. They were not insensate, therefore——

Some girls would have recognised the symptoms—Claire did not. She never thought about such things as love at all. These young men had been her companions all her days; they were her brothers; Will and Allen were part, the greater part, of her life; of course they loved her as she loved them.

Her father observed these indications with discernment. Clearly there was something coming. He remembered the race for the orange, and smiled. Which would Claire accept of the three? He expected that a formal proposal would be brought to himself, perhaps through the respectable parents. But he waited in vain. The respectable parents did not appear at all. Nor did the young men speak to him. He then remembered that the marriage customs of the English in some respects differ from those of France. Therefore he sat outside, so to speak, and watched.

He observed that Olinthus called twice a week, regularly; that he evidently wished this regularity to be marked as meaning intentions; that he always brought something, such as gloves, fruit, neckties, or flowers; that he laid his gifts upon the table without a word and presently departed after a few attempts at speech; also that Claire gathered up the gifts with a careless hand and tossed them aside when he was gone.

He perceived, next, that Allen and Will were rapidly approaching that stage at which jealousy begins. It was quite customary for them to meet at the Cottage, but now they came every night; sometimes they came together, but often separately.

In a beautiful map which shows the progress of the pilgrim of Love, there occurs, quite early in the pilgrimage, *L'Ile des Petits Soins* lying quite close to the *Terre d'Admiration*. It is succeeded by a black and grisly district, horrid with woods and dreadful mountains, as they used to say before the taste for the picturesque was awakened; it is called the *Pays des Jaloux*. Now, all these suitors were engaged among the gloomy defiles and black forests of this unpromising country. Tommy was the first to enter it, and the reason—as it seemed to him, not knowing that it was part of the pilgrimage—was the fact that Claire continued the old custom of walking with Allen in the forest, sometimes in the evening, alone with him. She had done this for many years, yet the enormity of the thing never occurred to Tommy until he began to consider the young lady as, in the sweet City parlance, his own property.

Tommy did not resolve upon pursuing this affair without great consideration. Before finally deciding upon paying his addresses to Claire, he surveyed womankind from China to Peru, reckoning from east to west, or as much of that space as he could command, including the young ladies of Loughton, Chingford, Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Theydon Bois, Epping, and even Leytonstone, going to church on Sunday mornings with no other object than the consideration of the other sex. He stood in the Porch and watched them coming out, seeing them in this way at their best, with their nicest frocks on and in their sweetest looks. He came to the deliberate conclusion that of all the girls Claire was the prettiest, and the best dressed, and the nicest. He then informed his mother of his design, not asking her counsel or permission, but announcing his will, like the great Bashaw.

'Only a governess, my dear?' she whispered.

'A beautiful woman, mother, in the eyes of her lover is the equal of a countess.' He thrust his hand into his bosom as he uttered this magnificent sentiment, and wished himself a duke, in order to illustrate it the more splendidly.

'Remember, Olinthus, you are a Gallaway.'

'I do not forget it,' he replied grandly. 'A man raises his wife to his own position. As a partner in the Concern, I already enjoy a position, which I shall confer upon my wife. You may prepare the girls, mother, for the news. I hope they will like their sister-in-law. Tell 'em,' he added, with simplicity, 'if they don't like her, they may go and live somewhere else.'

'You might look higher, Olinthus.'

'I might,' he replied. 'With manner and appearance, and a partnership in a steady Concern, one might look anywhere. But I am satisfied. Give me Claire. My tastes are simple. Of course, as regards her father some arrangement must be come to. He may come to the house once a week or so in the middle of the day, when I am in the City, or on Sunday to dinner, or perhaps supper will do, with a bit of salad and the cold beef—all that can be easily arranged.'

'Allen,' said Will, one morning in the train.

Allen changed colour because he foresaw that there was going to be an explanation.

'How long, Allen, is this kind of thing to go on?'

Allen shook his head helplessly.

'I've been thinking, old man,' Will went on, 'how to settle it. We can't afford to quarrel, we two. If Claire takes either of us, she must become the other fellow's sister. See?'

'Yes,' said Allen, 'she must be his sister.'

'Very well, then. Now I've been watching Claire.'

'So have I,' said Allen.

'Let us compare notes, then. I say, for my part, that she does not suspect anything.'

'I don't think she does,' said Allen.

'But the time has come for her to be told. Now I've got a plan. We might toss up who should speak first; but it seems hardly fair to leave such a serious thing to chance. Let us both write to her, and let us send the letters by the same post.'

This was reasonable. Neither, in this way, could have the least advantage over the other, and Claire would learn the truth.

'Of course,' said Will a little bitterly, 'you are the cleverer, Allen, and you have been most with her. She is sure to take you. But I should like to let her know—just to let her know—that I'm not such an insensible ass as not to be in love with her. As for that, I've been in love with her—and so have you—ever since we were children together. There is no one else in the world that I could be in love with.'

'But suppose she won't have either of us?' said Allen.

'Then we shall go on just the same as now. Was there ever in poetry a girl with two lovers who would have neither?'

'Remember, we are only two City clerks.'

'That is nothing. We are going to be rich City merchants. I shall change my name to Whittington. You shall be a great poet as well as a great merchant.'

'When, Will, when?'

'Soon, old boy—very soon; while we are young and can enjoy things. Don't you feel sometimes as if there were ten thousand things wanting to make you quite happy? Claire, to begin with; and then pictures, music, and books, and the theatre, and dancing and singing, and sometimes travelling; but Claire to begin with!'

'And without Claire?'

Will was silent awhile. The light went out of his face.

'Without Claire—nothing. Allen, don't you see how she has been everything to us? What should we have been without her and her father? I tremble, sometimes, to think what we have escaped.'

'Can't we wait a little?' asked Allen. 'Everything is so pleasant. It seems a pity to disturb pleasant things.'

Will shook his head.

'No; the pleasantness is disturbed. You glared at me after church last Sunday. That kind of thing can't go on.'

'As for that, you looked as if you were going to knock my head off yesterday evening.'

'I felt like it,' said Will.

They wrote their letters that same day. First they sat down to the table opposite to each other and resolutely took pen and paper. Then they looked at each other, thoughtfully.

'What are you going to say, Allen?' asked Will with anxiety.

'What shall you say?' he replied.

'If I was a poet—but no, poetry is only for make-believe. Everything real is prose.'

'They applied themselves with determination to thought. Neither had any experience in love-letters.

'Allen,' said Will, throwing down his pen, 'it's no use, I can't write it. I can't find words to say. Have you written your letter?'

Allen shook his head. At such a moment, when he should have found the most glowing words, his brain was barren; the reason being that he was not satisfied with the plain truth, which was in itself full of poetry, and wanted no more gilding than the crown of England.

'The thing is ridiculous,' cried Will. 'Look here: we will write one letter and both sign it.' He seized the pen again and wrote without fine words the simple truth.

'DEAREST CLAIRE,—We both love you; that you know already. We both desire, more than anything in the world, to be your husband. But you can only grant that to one of us, and the other must remain your brother. That one will go on loving you as a man loves his sister.

'Your lovers,
'ALLEN ENGLEDEW,
'WILL MASSEY.'

'There!' said Will. 'We have told her the truth in plain words. It is better than any dressing up. We will post this in the City to-morrow morning, so that she will have it in the forenoon, and have time to think of her answer.'

'But neither of us,' said Allen, 'must go to the Cottage till an answer is received.'

That night Will passed in watchfulness, because he distrusted the strength of the fraternal bond. Would the yearning which had of late possessed him so strongly, to take Claire in his arms and keep her there, cease, even if she were to choose Allen?

His rival slept soundly after thinking how the situation would fall into verse, and fitting some beautiful thoughts which could be put on paper when he found time.

Next morning they met Tommy at the station. They observed that he was fidgety in manner, as if he had something to communicate. He generally went first class, as a Partner should; but to-day he got into a third-class carriage with them.

'I've got to tell you fellows something,' he said, with a very crimson blush.

'Go on, Tommy,' said Will encouragingly. Neither of them ever paid Tommy the deference due to a Partner.

'It's about Claire.' The other two started and looked guilty. 'Yes, about Claire. I think it right to tell you, because you go to the Cottage so often and seem to consider the place your own property, that after to-day you will have to wait till you are invited.'

'Indeed, Tommy! Why?'

'Because I've written to Claire—henceforth Mademoiselle Philipon to everybody except myself, if you please. Remember that—I've written to her, and the letter is in my pocket, asking her—in fact—to become Mrs. Gallaway.'

'Oho!' cried Will—what did they both laugh for?—'And the letter is in your pocket?'

'In my pocket. I've consented to waive the difference in rank, and have offered her—my hand.' He held it out, a white, fat hand, with the same expression upon it as upon his face. Everybody knows this peculiarity in hands. It was a carefully groomed hand, too, with three rings. 'My mother,' he went on, 'is going to break it to the girls, and will, of course, call upon Cl—— I mean Mademoiselle Philipon—as soon as she has answered my letter.'

'Upon my word, Tommy,' said Allen, 'you are very good and generous.'

'A Partner in such a Concern as ours might look higher. But never mind. I thought I'd tell you both, because we are old friends, and because, you see, when a man's engaged, he can't have other fellows hanging round his girl.'

'I see,' said Will. 'It was very considerate of you to tell us. And now, Tommy, one good turn deserves another. So you must know that Allen and I have both written to her as well, and made precisely the same offer. We all start fair.'

'You've written, too?' Tommy turned very red.

'We've written, too. Claire—no—for you, Mademoiselle Philipon—will get the offers of all three at the same time.'

'I call this,' said Tommy, in a great rage, 'confounded sharp practice.'

'Why?'

'Because you must have known that I meant business. Do you think I have been going there three times a week to have the pleasure of hearing her father talk French? You must have seen it. Anybody must have seen it.'

'If,' said Allen, 'I had seen it, I should only have written or spoken sooner.'

'Cheer up, Tommy,' said Will. 'Perhaps Claire saw it, and that is, you know, the most important point.'

Tommy sat glum and sulky—his friends, he felt, were not afraid of his rivalry—till the train arrived at Liverpool Street. Then he got down with dignity and went straight to the nearest pillar post, into which he dropped his letter.

He really felt very much hurt, and seriously alarmed, because it never had occurred to him that the other two should also 'mean business.' In the course of the day, however, he took heart, thinking that he was a Partner and they were only clerks; also that Allen might be a good-looking fellow enough, but he was lanky and wore glasses, and that Will was certainly too big a fellow to take any girl's fancy.

Claire received the letters when she came home from the school. She read them, and her heart began to beat and her lips to tremble. Because she felt, somehow, as if she loved two of them in exactly the same way. As for the third, she neither blushed nor trembled when she read his letter. She put it down gently, however, and smiled.

When her father came in from the garden, she gave him the letters without a word.

'Does my daughter wish to leave her father, yet?' he said.

She laid her arms about his neck and kissed him, with a tender love in her eyes.

'What answer shall I give, my dear?' he asked.

'I don't know.' She blushed and hid her face on his shoulder. 'I have no answer.'

'Allen? Will? Olinthus?'

She made no reply.

'Shall I send an answer, Claire? Shall I bid them wait?'

'Oh! yes. Let them wait.'

'I mean for a certain period, dear. We will give them a little time to prove themselves. Will is certain to succeed if he gets a chance. Allen will be a poet. Olinthus will be an alderman. Let them wait.'

He saw two of them and wrote to the third. To Allen and Will he said that they were bidden by Claire to supper the next evening, and at the supper they should have their answer. To

Olinthus he said that no father could receive an offer of this kind without emotion. Would he, in person, receive Claire's reply? If so, a supper awaited him at nine o'clock, after which he should learn her decision. Meantime, let him bring to the supper, which was to be a banquet worthy of so great an occasion, a heart of joy.

'A banquet, and a heart of joy.' There could be no doubt, thought Tommy, of the reply.

'I suppose, mother,' he said, showing her the letter, 'that we may consider the thing as good as settled. After all, I doubt whether I've done the best for myself, eh?'

'It's a great honour for her,' said his mother. 'And I only hope she will show that she feels it, and not give herself airs.'

'Yet she is, you know, really and truly, mother, a most beautiful girl. Isn't she now?'

'I am not denying her good looks, Olinthus. But *my* son should have got something better than good looks. An heiress, Olinthus, I had hoped for.'

He smiled and stroked his chin.

'It would have been pleasant to have married an heiress. Yet, what heiress could be half so beautiful as Claire? In love, mother,' he said grandly, 'we despise fortune, and think only of beauty. Think of that girl dressed as she ought to be. Oh!'

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BANQUET.

If the young men brought to the banquet the heart of joy which had been recommended they dissembled. There were no signs of joy at all among the little group upon Hector's lawn the next evening, but rather of constraint and embarrassment. They spoke little, and nobody seemed to pay attention to what was said. M. Philipon wore his whitest waistcoat and his finest rosebud, and received the three young men with the cordiality of one who bestows, as well as receives, honour. He was, however, fully alive to the responsibility of the position, and felt that he had a serious speech to make, and that it was due to his daughter that the speech should be expressed in fitting words. Claire did not appear. Could it be that they were going to have the banquet without her? As for the young men, Will and Allen stood together, Allen with one hand on Will's shoulder, as if for support. Olinthus stood apart from the others, wearing a smile of assurance which now and then gave place to a look of anxiety. He was dressed with great splendour, wore all his rings and chains, and had the shiniest of hats.

Just when the constraint and the silence became painful there appeared in the porch a little serving maid, with a white cap and a long white apron, very neat, and appropriate to the cottage.

'My friends,' cried the host, 'supper awaits us. Permit me to lead the way.'

He led them into the house. They found that Claire was waiting them. She was dressed in some sort of creamy white stuff with a ribbon round her neck and a white flower in her black hair, and she looked so sweet, so dainty, that Allen choked, and Will turned pale, and Olinthus red. She bowed to them without offering her hand or raising her eyes; and then she took her father's arm.

'Gentlemen,' said Hector, 'on this occasion I lead my daughter to the banquet.' If she had been a duchess and he the Regent; if the cottage had been the Palais Royal; if the supper had been of royal or regental character, he could not have assumed a more courtly air. The young men followed in great awe and expectation.

'My dear friends,' said their host, 'take your places; let there be no jealousies; Claire sits beside me. Olinthus, you are nearest—take the chair next to her. Allen, my pupil, sit on this side of me. Will, take the opposite chair. So.'

He sat down and looked about him with a truly festive countenance, though the occasion was a grave one. Yet whatever is to come after supper, let the joy which belongs to that meal be maintained. The supper was served on the whitest of table covers and in the plainest of white china. It took a great number of dishes and in the giver's eyes it was magnificent. Indeed, at first, everybody's breath was taken away by the mere aspect of the spread and the profusion of flowers in which it lay imbedded. No supper, however magnificent, could have made a more imposing appearance.

On the present occasion, there were five tiny lamb cutlets lying on a white bank of mashed potatoes; there was a dish of new potatoes, boiled, another of potatoes *sautés*, another of early peas, another of asparagus, another of cauliflower *au gratin*, another of spinach served with eggs and butter. There was a dish of gooseberry fool. There was an immense bowl of salad, prepared by the hands of Claire herself, there was bread *à discrétion*, and there was a little plate of cheese. Everything, in fact, except the cutlets and the cheese and the bread, had come straight from the garden.

'My friends,' said Hector joyously, all his embarrassment gone as he surveyed this royal supper, 'this is magnificent, it is superb, it makes the heart rejoice'—he looked round the table—'where, but where is the wine? Hein? Is it possible? I had forgotten the wine—aha! the wine to make us merry. Behold the bottle'—he could reach it from the sideboard

without rising from his seat. 'Aha! the Divine Bottle! the glou-glou of the bottle!'

He handled the bottle as lovingly as if it contained a liquid more precious than words can express. He held it up to the light, held it carefully, so as not to shake it, and inserted the screw as an angler sticks on his worm, as if he loved the cork. Then when, with a voluptuous pop, the cork left the bottle, M. Philipon laughed softly, and placed the Divine Bottle beside him, wagging his head and forefinger at it as if it, too, were a boon companion. Two of the young men knew the wine well. They were perfectly acquainted with the resources of the cellar, and they both looked straight before them as if fearing to meet each other's eyes. Only from Allen, who was imaginative, a faint shiver escaped with a whispered trembling of the lips as if caused by the rolling of a few r's.

'Supper,' said their host, a spoon in one hand and a fork in the other, 'supper, like all good things, is a French invention. I do not boast, my friends, I merely state a fact. No one knew what supper could be before the time of the Regent—the first man of modern times who understood how to live. We will imagine ourselves—for this evening only—in the time of the Regent; we will feast like him, we will talk like him—that is, at a respectful distance; we will dismiss the lacqueys and servants'—he spoke as if his one little maid was a complete staff—'and we will wait upon each other—that is, we will all wait upon Claire. My dear, let me find for you, among all these cutlets, the sweetest, the best cooked, the most delicious.'

It would have been impossible for the most generous of hosts, had his eyes been turned upon Olinthus at this moment, to escape the discovery that he was counting, with a disappointment impossible to be concealed, the number of cutlets in the dish. There were five—one apiece; as for the rest, he had now discovered that it was nothing but salad and flowers. And he had been invited to supper, and he had been promised a royal banquet, and he had taken only a slender meal in the middle of the day in order to do justice to that banquet. One lamb cutlet—with salad! The other two, however, were not disappointed: they knew what to expect. To M. Philipon a cup of chocolate was a large early breakfast; a cubic inch of beef stewed in a mess of onions, carrots, and potatoes made a midday *déjeuner*; a *croûte au pot*, with another inch of beef and a dish of lentils or beans, made a substantial dinner. This supper, with its festive array of dishes, its variety of vegetables, and the presence of his guests, was to him a veritable feast of Belshazzar. They wondered not, but yet they trembled, because they must needs pass through the ordeal of the wine.

Their host urged them to superhuman efforts, and congratulated them on their prowess, as if a whole lamb cutlet was in itself a feast worthy of an alderman. The young men,

stimulated by these exhortations, went on eating until there was not a stalk of asparagus, or a single potato, or a morsel of cauliflower.

'Go on, brave boys,' cried their host, with glowing eyes. 'The English are as valiant at the table as on the field. They are lusty feasters. Allen, another potato. Will, more spinach. Olinthus, you spare the cheese. It is good to see these young athletes. It is Achilles, with Ajax and Diomede—brave Diomede; no doubt he greatly resembled Olinthus. It is a Homeric banquet, or—yes, it is the Centaurs feasting after a fight; or, still better, it is the suitors of Penelope feasting in the Palace of Ithaca. Desist not; eat as valiantly as Friar John; drink as deep as a Franciscan friar. Allen, the bottle stands by you; let it move on—let it trot—let it gallop. Olinthus, fill up, fill up all; let us drink like the good folk of Chinon; let us drink without stopping, except to eat.'

With these rollicking and Rabelaisian exhortations did M. Philipon stimulate the revellers and astonish his daughter, who saw, to her amazement, the bottle fly from hand to hand and the young men pour continually more wine into their glasses. They poured as little as they could, and it seemed as if the bottle never would get finished. When you added water to the proportion of three to one, you practically disguised the sourness of the wine, though you made the water thin. At last Allen, who could bear the thing no longer, and who trembled lest Tommy should say something that would annoy their host—indeed he was beginning to look dangerous—poured out all that was left into his tumbler, and heroically drank it off at a gulp. Claire looked in terror to see some of the signs of intoxication. The young men might, if her father went on plying them with strong drink, roll under the table, or have to catch each other by the shoulders as she had seen men do in Epping Forest.

So infectious, in fact, was the gaiety assumed by their host at this imaginary feast that two of the three guests were presently quite carried away by it, and laughed and talked as if the potency of the wine had indeed mounted to their brains and unlocked their tongues. The gravity of the occasion, the importance of the decision that was immediately to be announced to them, seemed forgotten. Allen, for his part, brandished his glass in sympathy when his host flourished the bottle over his head and quoted the French song—

> Je ne quitterai jamais ma mye
> Tandis qu'elle fera glou glou:
> Je ne quitterai jamais ma mye
> Qu'elle ne soit vuide de tout.

As if the wine was of the most rollicking kind, and charged with mirth and song and revelry. And Will laughed approvingly.

Claire for her part, knowing why the young men were bidden to the feast, and remembering what was about to be said to them, and what hopes were to be destroyed or postponed that evening, felt pained at the exhibition of gaiety, and wondered how men can be so light of heart and so careless even when their own happiness—if they are truthful—is at stake. Claire was not experienced in the heart of male man, else she would have known that the excitement of expectation, of suspense, of a deed done or yet to do, is strangely akin to gaiety. When Oliver Cromwell signed the death-warrant of the King, he fillipped his neighbour with the ink. Not out of frivolous light-heartedness, if you please, but as a relief to the heaviness of his heart. These young men at least were profoundly anxious, and when Allen Engledew brandished his glass like a mad monk of Medmenham, it was because he was unconsciously seeking refuge from trouble in merriment.

This explanation is intended only for metaphysicians, and for the seekers after that which cannot be found.

Claire wondered, but she said nothing and was silent, keeping her eyes down and anxious for the time when she might leave the table.

Olinthus, it may be observed, responded only partially and with effort. He was too hungry to laugh, and, besides, he saw nothing to laugh at. Being asked to drink vinegar and eat salad when one was raging with hunger seemed to him like going beyond the limits of legitimate mirth.

When there was nothing more to eat, and even the bottle was at length happily empty, their entertainer began to wink mysteriously and to shake a finger with a meaning wink.

'Good Heaven!' thought Tommy; 'what is he going to give us next?'

But his spirits were raised when he remembered that French people frequently finish their banquets with a *gloria* or *chasse café*. 'Brandy, I hope,' he murmured.

'On this occasion,' said M. Philipon, 'which is remarkable, I produce a bottle of remarkable wine; a veritable *grand vin*, a Margaux of *premier crû*. It is as old as Claire, and was enclosed in its casket of glass the very year in which she was born.'

He drew forth, from some secret recess, a small pint bottle covered with dust. This he uncorked with immense ceremony.

'Claire, my daughter,' he said, his bright eyes softening, 'we have feasted and we have laughed in your honour. Woman is the giver of all joy; therefore we do well to be joyful in her honour. This day, my dear, you have attained your majority. You are of age, not because you are eighteen, but because these young gentlemen have become your suitors. We shall drink, my best of daughters, to you!'

He filled four glasses, which proved to be exactly the measure of the bottle, and passed one to each.

Then all stood up, glass in hand.

'Claire, my child!'

'Claire!'

They drained their glasses and set them down; that is, three of the four men did. Tommy set his down unfinished with a gasp and a shiver; for, alas! the vaunted wine had been kept too long, and it was even more sour than its predecessor.

Claire looked from one to the other with a smile of thanks, and then, blushing violently, rose from her seat.

'Yes, child,' said her father, 'I will not say in your presence what I have to say to these young men concerning you. Leave us, my dear.'

He held out both his hands, drew her towards him, and kissed her gravely on the forehead. Then, still holding her—

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'before Claire goes, you may each of you—yes—her father permits so much—you may kiss her hand.

Tommy, outraged by the last glass of claret, thought this permission, being of a hollow and Barmecide character, was only a natural ending to a banquet from which he rose more hungry than when he sat down—one lamb cutlet and a pint of vinegar! He had no desire to kiss Claire's hand; he wanted to kiss her lips; as for a girl's fingers, anybody might kiss them that pleased. Still, to refuse might be misunderstood, and if he was expected to enjoy the privilege, he must pretend. He therefore hastened to be the first to lift her hand, and imprinted a kiss with as much fervour as he could. Allen, for his part, blushing as much as the girl herself, bent respectfully over and touched the fingers with his lips, murmuring a few words. Will did not bend more than was necessary, but he looked at Claire while he raised her hand; and he was rewarded by a shy and troubled look, as she lifted her eyes for a moment.

Then she was gone, and the time was arrived for the speech to be made.

M. Philipon invited his guests to resume their chairs and presently began:—

'Gentlemen, you know why I have called you here. You will appreciate my desire in proposing that before entering upon the subject, at once so delicate and so important, we should all feast together as good friends and *bons camarades*.' Here Olinthus dropped his eyes upon his plate, where yet lingered the bone of the single lamb cutlet. 'Now, then, that our hearts are glad with old wine'—nobody smiled: on such a subject a smile might have been misinterpreted—'we will approach the subject which is in our minds.'

'It is the English custom,' he went on, 'in affairs of the heart, to address one's self first to the young lady. In France we arrange these things differently, perhaps more simply, perhaps with the effect of producing fewer mistakes. That is

nothing; I bow, gentlemen, to the English custom'—he saluted the three with a comprehensive sweep. 'You have followed the method adopted by your compatriots. I accept it. And I thank you for the honour you have conferred upon me and upon my respectable family.'

He paused here, and sat down in order that these words might produce their full and desired effect, and they all three bowed. Then he rose again, and placed his left hand in his bosom, behind his white waistcoat, reserving his right for gesture. But remark that a well-educated Frenchman does not greatly gesticulate. A Frenchman in a rage or a Frenchman carried away by the passion of indignation or contempt may use arms and hands in a fine freedom and frenzy, but not, if you please, a dignified *père de famille* who is calmly discussing the future of his daughter.

'Gentlemen,' the speaker continued, 'it is my duty to inform you, at the outset, that the *dot* of my Claire is—is—in fact—not worth mentioning.

Here they all three murmured and spread out their hands and bowed and blushed, and Olinthus made some remark about things being enough for two.

'I know,' the speaker went on, 'the wonderful English custom of marrying a wife without any *dot* at all. Droll manner! It is the husband who finds the *dot*, in the shape of an insurance on his life. The insular prejudice against economy is nowhere so strongly shown. You refuse to save anything. You insure. You trust to your strong arms. It is a valiant nation indeed, where the fathers give nothing to the bride, and the bridegroom has nothing, and both are rich—in the future. A brave people, truly! Yet, gentlemen, I love the French custom best, and I would that it were in my power to give my Claire the *dot* which she merits. Then would her husband be truly rich. As for myself, you have probably heard that the events, known to all the world, which drove me from my country, shut me out from the honourable career in which I should have grown rich. I do not accuse my fate. I am one of the martyrs of France. It is sweet and decorous for your country's sake to be a *professeur* of French in an institution of demoiselles.'

Here he paused again, and here Will lifted up his voice and begged him not to let the question of the *dot* weigh upon his mind at all, because they loved Claire without any thought of money.

'Brave young men!' said her father. 'You would, perhaps, insure.'

Olinthus said that so far as a policy of a thousand might go he should be most happy to meet M. Philipon's views.

'Gentlemen,' M. Philipon resumed, 'the family to which I belong has long been honourably connected with the commerce of my country. My brother still controls the vast establish-

ment formerly directed by my father and my grandfather. It is a *magasin de literie*, a storehouse of—ch!—of beddery. In beddery my ancestors have been for three generations of the first force. Remark, gentlemen, that I pretend not to illustrious birth and claim no great ancestors. We are of the people—like yourselves.'

They nodded their heads gravely. They were not themselves in 'beddery,' but two were in silk and one was in oil, and there is not much difference what you are in, provided you are deep in it, up to your neck in it; with room to plunge about in it; in it 'in a large way.' It is not everybody who can speak of controlling a vast establishment. Words do not convey the same significance to all hearers, nor did the young men suppose that the vast establishment was but an ordinary shop.

'My daughter,' the Frenchman went on, 'has received from every one of you, and almost at the same time, which shows that you were each anxious to be first in the field and jealous of the others, an offer which not only confers honour upon her, but also upon yourselves. Because, my friends, it shows that the young men who have been my pupils and friends for so many years are fully sensible to the charms of a girl who is as good as she is beautiful. Her mother was an Englishwoman. When I think of that fact and remember her many virtues, I would have my daughter, too, all English. You are young men, I confess, of great worth and of much promise, but, boys, which one of you—I ask—is yet worthy of my child?'

Upon this Tommy remarked, with a little cough, that he knew it well and had felt it; but he trusted that, with the income which he now hoped to make, having been recently admitted to a partnership in the Concern, not to speak of the insurance he was ready to effect, it would not be long before he could prove himself worthy of the young lady.

Allen said that he desired humbly to acknowledge his full sense of his own unworthiness.

Will, with a little thickness in his speech, most certainly not due to the claret, said that nobody could be worthy of her, but he would do his best for her, if—— And here he stopped.

Monsieur Philipon bowed gravely to each.

'It is well spoken,' he said, 'and every one according to his heart. So that, gentlemen, you will not be surprised or offended at my reply on behalf of my dear Claire. You all love her, I suppose. Then, gentlemen, prove it by waiting and working for her. I give you three years. You are all about twenty-one years of age. You shall have Claire's answer—from Claire's own lips, not from mine—when you are twenty-four. I do not tell you to go away and see her no more for that space of time: I do not ask you to desist from your visits, my dear young

friends. I could not think of inflicting so great a pain upon myself as to see you no more all this time. Whether you go or whether you stay, ask again in three years' time, if you are then in the same mind. Claire, meantime, will wait. It will be well if during this time you do not –hein?—talk of love—make eyes of sheep. You will very likely forget her. You will go away and forget her. You are young! Youth is the time of hasty loves and quick forgetting.'

'Oh! oh!' they all protested.

'Again, by the time you are twenty-four you will possibly be more awakened to the blessings of a *dot*, and may repent of an engagement with a penniless girl.'

'Oh! oh!' they all protested again.

'You live, gentlemen, in a village where the talk is of the money which has been lost; you work in a city where the talk is all of the money which may be made. The atmosphere everywhere is filled with the perfume of bank-notes, shares, bonds, and coupons. You breathe this air—it is like slow poison to some'—he looked at Allen—'like the keen mountain air, which stimulates, to others'—he looked at Will—'and like their own native air to others'—he looked at Olinthus, who smiled and bowed, and felt that the highest compliment had been paid him. 'So, gentlemen, I have finished. In three years Claire shall, if she then pleases, bestow her hand upon one of you. I hope that she will give it to the most worthy among you. Gentlemen,'—here he became very grave—'if during this period you live well –as young Englishmen do sometimes live—this child will remain to you, and become more and more to you a goddess worthy of all worship and reverence. If you live not well, she will become quite a common woman, a wild flower, of no use except to be plucked and thrown away. Remember that the *chevalier sans reproche* makes the truest lover.'

He finished: he sat down: he rested his head upon his hand, and looked gravely upon his friends. *Dixerat:* he had spoken.

Will Massey made reply, simply.

He said, 'We thank you, sir. Perhaps we could expect no more. We are young men with all our work before us. We will respect your confidence in us, and take no advantage.'

'No advantage,' echoed Allen.

'Three years!' murmured Olinthus.

Then they rose, wished their host good-night, and so out into the twilight of June, where the moon shone on the Forest, turning greys and browns into blacks and whites, and in the soft air the foolish cockchafers were buzzing about and getting into people's whiskers.

'I say, you fellows,' said Tommy, when they were well in the road, 'what do you think of it? Impudence, I call it.

Nothing short of impudence. For what is he, after all? A common French master. Without a rap.'

He leaned against the palings, and waited for a reply.

'What do you say, Allen?' asked Will.

'Three years!' Tommy went on grumbling. 'Three whole years! Why, in three years a man might be in the Bankruptcy Court. Most likely he would if he stayed on in a hole like this, which reeks of bankruptcy. Three years!'

'Why,' said Allen; 'three years is not such a very long time.'

'As for me,' Tommy went on grumbling; 'I want to go away and live as a gentleman should—in Chambers. But if you two are going to hang on here, and take advantage behind my back——'

'We promised to take no advantage,' said Will gravely.

'Oh! yes, I know. You won't fall down on your knees to her. But as for you, Will, you will be in the garden working for her, making her things, and Allen will be bringing her books, and unless I am to be out of it altogether I shall have to stay here too.'

'Well, Tommy,' said Will, 'you can't expect us to go away just because you want to live in Chambers.'

'A gentleman,' said Tommy, '*can't* live here. It is not possible.'

'Allen and I are only clerks yet,' he replied. 'Time enough, later on, to consider the manners and customs of gentlemen.'

Just then Allen spoiled what might have been an interesting discussion on the manners and characteristics of the British gentleman by suddenly bursting into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

'What's the matter, Allen?' asked Will.

'Did you—did you—' he gasped, at length—'did you see Tommy's face when he had eaten up his cutlet?'

Then Will began to laugh, and Tommy grew hot and angry.

'He had had no dinner—on purpose,' Allen went on, 'to enable him to eat more supper. Ho! Ho!'

'I don't see what you are laughing at,' said Tommy. 'I call it an imposition to promise a supper and give a man a lamb cutlet and cabbage with vinegar to drink, and to go on all the while like a Tom Fool at a fair about feasting and drinking.'

But the other two continued to laugh.

'And as to unworthiness,' Tommy grumbled, 'we read stuff like that in novels. But, you know, it is downright rubbish. That's not the way that practical people—people in the City—look at things. A good-looking fellow'—he held out one foot and his eyes fell complacently along the leg—'*with* a good position and an income'—he hoped his friends would not be hurt in their feelings by this remark, but he desired to assert

the truth, and he certainly was a Junior Partner—'is fit for any girl. Sentiment does not go down in the City.'

'Never mind, Tommy,' said Will. 'I think, Allen, that we were right in having an explanation. It wasn't right of us to begin to be jealous and distrustful of each other; and we ought not to have expected M. Philipon to decide for any of us. Why, Jacob served seven years, and seven years more, for Rachel. Can we not serve three for the chance of Claire?'

'And we are twenty-one, Will. And Jacob, if you come to think of it, was seventy-eight when he began to serve for Rachel.'

'Here's more rubbish,' said Tommy; but whether he was thinking of Rachel or Claire, of Jacob the Patriarch, or of Will the Youthful, did not appear.

CHAPTER XV.

BIVER'S LEGACY.

Who would have thought, when Biver began to take the brandy-bottle to bed with him, that the whole future of two English lads would have been affected by so simple an act, so common, too, in thirsty climes? Such a natural accompaniment to so many colonial careers!

When Biver went out to Shanghai as representative to the House of Brimage and Waring, he was not a thirsty young man at all; he was, on the contrary, a young man who held strong moral objections to thirstiness except at tea-time, and was great in commonplace about the ruin caused by drink. He was, in short, one of those young men who regard speech as merely a vehicle for the commonplace, and the brain as devised merely for learning the commonplace. There are a good many such young men, not only in the City but outside it. It was partly because Biver was so good at commonplace, both commercial and moral, that he was sent out. Yet, sad to say, in five or six years Biver had actually arrived at taking the brandy-bottle to bed with him, and the meal called tea existed for him no longer.

That was the beginning of the end. It mattered very little so long as Biver went to bed drunk and got up sober; a man may go on so for a great many years; but when Biver began to go to bed drunk, and to get up drunk, and to be drunk all day long, he entered upon a path which quickly leads to deterioration of the finer instincts of business.

I do not know exactly what it was that Biver did at last; it was something which not only broke the camel's back, but made the cup run over, and, at the same time, put all the fat in the

fire. I believe he sat down and began to buy right and left all the silk in the market at five-and-twenty per cent. above its possible selling value, just as if he had been representing the Government of England instead of a mercantile firm. This magnificence was stopped by telegraph before he had lost many millions, and he was deprived of the power to do any more harm to the Firm. Biver was ordered home; he hugged his brandy bottle and went on board the next mail. But he had either overrated his own strength or underrated the strength of the brandy, and when the ship was still in the Narrow Seas he had to be dropped overboard, while the passengers stood in a semi-circle and the captain read the service, and the youngest steward cried aloud, using one of the ship's napkins for a handkerchief, not because he loved and lamented the deceased at all, but because it was the first time he had seen the handiwork of Death the Conqueror.

This is the tragical history of Biver, and, indeed, of many a gallant youth who seeks his fortune abroad.

And this is the reason why Brimage and Waring wanted a new representative in Shanghai.

The partners considered their office and its occupants, and their eyes fell upon the two lads. They were both of good character; they both knew two modern languages; they were handsome young men, of good bearing and good address, presentable anywhere. It does a house good to be represented abroad by young gentlemen of pleasing manners.

But they only wanted one, and they hesitated which to take. For the appointment, though it led to such risks as that which proved fatal to Biver the bibulous, was great promotion; a handsome salary was attached to the post; there was no telling what might not follow—even partnerships had followed—for successfully representing the house in Shanghai.

The partners finally decided on Allen. He was intelligent, though perhaps, they thought, knowing nothing about the poetry, not so intelligent as the other lad; he could be safely trusted to carry out instructions with discretion, which means, in commercial matters, with alacrity in perceiving when disobedience is best. Moreover, which finally decided them, he was the son of an old servant of the House whose unmerited disasters and tragic ending had not yet been quite forgotten.

They sent for Allen: they communicated with great solemnity the decision they had arrived at; the senior partner even began an exhortation on the responsibilities of the position, when, to everybody's astonishment, the young man, who had been blushing painfully, interrupted him with the astounding information that he was obliged to decline the offer.

'Are you afraid to go?' asked the senior partner bluntly.

'Are you unable to leave your mother alone?' asked a junior partner kindly.

'Are you anxious about the duties?' asked another.

'Gentlemen,' said Allen, holding his head very erect, 'I am not afraid to go, and my mother will be very angry and disappointed with me, at least I fear so, because I refuse the honour of this post. But I cannot go.'

'You have perhaps formed ties; yet you are young,' said the senior.

'Come, Engledew,' said the other. 'we would gladly befriend your father's son; we have offered the place to you because we would help you if we could. Do not trifle with your fortune.'

'I cannot go, sir, thank you.'

'We give you till to-morrow. Go home at once; consult your mother. Such a chance may never happen to you again. Go now, and meet us here to-morrow at noon.'

Allen retired. He went home and told his mother of the offer which had been made him. The widow clasped her hands and began to shed tears of joy.

'I must lose you, Allen,' she said; 'but that is nothing, for your foot is on the ladder at last, and all you have to do is to climb. My dear boy you will retrieve the name; you will wipe out your poor father's disgrace.'

'Mother,' said her son, 'that is already retrieved; it was never lost. Not a man who knew my father but knows that he had nothing to do with his partner's evil practices. You wish me to wipe out a disgrace which never took place. What has been done cannot be undone; let us cease to make it worse by supposing the worst.'

'But he was bankrupt, Allen, and he committed——'

'I know, I know. Yet there was no disgrace. Mother, I have my own name to think of, more even than the honourable name of my father. I must think of that first.'

'Surely, Allen, surely.' She began to tremble, because her son looked so determined. What did he mean? What was he going to say? 'Your success will be your own, my son; and yet—oh!—doubt not that your dead father will rejoice in it.'

'Yes, mother, if I succeed. But if I do, it will not be'—he laid his hand on hers and looked her in the face—'it will not be in the City.'

'Not in the City?' She knew of no success possible out of the City. What did he mean?

'No, mother, the time has come—it has been coming a long time—when I can go to the City no more. The work has long been intolerable to me.'

'Oh! Allen, you mean that you are glad to go to China.' But she knew very well that he meant nothing of the sort. 'You mean that you are rejoiced to have a change. Well, dear, boys are so. If you are pleased, I am pleased.'

'I mean, mother, that I am going to give up my post at

Brimage and Waring's and that I shall try another line of life altogether. I shall try to live by literature.'

She only understood one way in which money could be made. There were doctors and clergymen, but they did not seem to make any money. The City was the only place.

'Letters? You mean by writing things? But you can't make your fortune by writing.'

'Mother, I am not going to try to make a fortune. I am going to live simply. I shall probably always be a poor man. But I shall try to make a name—and—and to do good work.' His voice trembled a little, because this kind of work seemed to him so sacred a thing—which it undoubtedly is.

'A name—without money? Allen, you are mad. Oh! your head is turned with your book-reading and your writing. Allen! Allen! I implore you. I will go on my knees to you.'

'Mother!'

'Yes, Allen, if you will only give up this wild design.' She wept, she implored; but he was obstinate. 'You are mad—you are mad,' she repeated. 'You will only starve in such a life.'

'I shall not starve, mother,' he said gently, 'and you have enough for your own wants. I shall go to London and make, somehow, enough for my own. Only do not send me away in anger.'

If he had left her that night, she would certainly have sent him away in anger and bitterness. What was literature in her eyes? What was anything compared to the City? And her boy had the fairest prospects, and he was going to throw all away—the dream of twenty years, that he would 'retrieve' his father's name, and be respected in the City, was suddenly shattered.

In the morning Allen again presented himself before the partners. His resolution was unshaken. He declined the China appointment and resigned his situation in the house.

'May we ask,' said the senior partner, 'if you will give us any reason—what you intend to do?'

'I am going to follow literature,' he replied, with the deepest blush possible.

The senior partner turned his back upon him, and said no more. His time was too valuable to be wasted upon a fool—a mere fool. One of the juniors asked him if he knew—if he had considered—the kind of life he was about to choose.

Allen said that he supposed it would be a life of poverty and, perhaps, hardship. But there would be compensations.

'What compensations are there?' asked the partner, who belonged to three good clubs, lived in the Cromwell Road, dined every day like Dives, and saw a doctor twice a week, in order to keep himself and his digestion in good order. 'What possible compensations are there for poverty and hardship?'

'Art,' said Allen proudly, 'compensates for everything.'

'Good morning, young man,' said the partner.

In this way did Allen leave Brimage and Waring's, and turned his back upon the City.

Then they sent for Will, and made him the same offer.

He accepted with an eagerness which contrasted favourably with Allen's hesitation.

'You are not afraid to go?' asked the senior. 'There are always dangers in foreign countries.'

'To get promotion, sir,' said Will, 'I would cheerfully go to the Gold Coast.'

'Good. You shall have promotion. If you do well you shall have more promotion. But remember Biver; we must have no more drunkards.'

'I shall not drink, sir.'

'That is also good. I am informed that there is a good deal of loo and baccarat and other games of chance going on out there. We must have no gamblers.'

'I shall not gamble, sir.'

Then they went on to give him instructions. He was to start at once—that very week, if possible; he was to follow certain lines laid down for his guidance: on occasion he was to act for himself. This independent action would determine his future.

'We can trust you, I think,' said the senior partner, watching the young man's resolute look and quick intelligence. 'Go now. Your outfit will be given you and your passage, of course. Go and begin your preparations.'

. . . . . .

'So, young man,' said Sir Charles, 'you are going to China, I hear. Money has been made in China before now, and lost. There have been several most interesting failures connected with the China trade.'

'You are wrong, Massey,' said Mr. Colliber solemnly. 'You are wrong; you should stay where the money is. Never go away from the money.'

'And young Engledew, his mother tells me,' continued Sir Charles, 'has positively given up his place at Brimage and Waring's, and means to become a common writing person—a writing person; sad! sad!'

'Deplorable,' murmured Mr. Skantlebury.

'He will not listen to reason. His mother, who has been to me about it, is broken-hearted. Pitiable, indeed,' said Sir Charles. 'A common writing person! After enjoying our society and actually possessing the privilege of knowing a man of your colossal failure, Colliber. Wonderful!'

'The boy is a fool,' said Colliber; 'let him go.'

'We shall lose all our young men at once,' said Sir Charles. 'That will be a blow. Young Gallaway finds that he must live nearer his office, in order to push the business. There is a lad for you—a freeman of the city, member of a Livery, and an

ambitious heart! Massey, hold Olinthus Gallaway up as a bright example and pattern. He will be Lord Mayor yet—he will—ha! ha! ha! A noble young man, indeed! But, my friends, I fear we shall not ourselves live to see his bankruptcy.'

. . . . . .

Yes, the evening of the banquet was almost the last that they were to spend together at the Cottage. The last was the night before Will went away. Allen was to go too, and they were all three sad and silent.

'Let us go,' Will said, 'into the Forest.'

'They walked, the three—Claire between the two young men—along the well-known broad way of grass, between the trees; they passed the amphitheatre where they had played so many games together and held so many talks; their silent footsteps led them into the leafy lanes where the evening sunlight coloured the green branches above them and the grey trunks and the underwood, and made them all glorious; they came to the place where the old fallen tree lay on the ground. And there Claire sat down and fell a-weeping because both her friends were going to leave her.

'Allen,' said Will, 'you are going away too. Say something to Claire.'

'No, Will,' Allen replied, 'what I have to say is to you. But I want Claire to hear it.' He hesitated for a moment, and then went on with a firm voice. 'I have this to say, Will: You are going away for a long while, it may be more than three years; it may be four or five before you come back. Claire knows that we both love her; and that we shall always love her—all our lives. But I shall never ask her to choose between us, till the day when we can stand together before her as we do now, and say again what we have already said.'

'Thanks, Allen.' Will held out his hand, but he said no more.

'You are too good to me,' said Claire; 'you think too much of me. I am only a girl——'

'Only a girl!' Allen repeated.

'And you are men—strong men. How could I ever choose between you? You have always been in my heart—both of you—from the beginning. You are always in my thoughts—together. And this is our last evening. Will—dear Will. . . . .' She laid her hand in his. He stooped and kissed it, and turned away his head. 'How can we live without you? Write to my father—and to me—and tell us all that you do. Allen will sometimes come to see me. You will rejoice when he succeeds, will you not, Will? And oh! you must not let any thought of me bring a shadow between you. Promise me that.'

They took hands, but neither spoke.

'Now I can do nothing,' she said, 'nothing at all but wait and hope and pray. Come, now, and comfort my father, who will have nobody to talk to except myself. I think we shall talk about nothing at all, every evening, except you two.'

Part II.—The Work of the Man.

CHAPTER I.

THE EMANCIPATION OF HECTOR.

THREE years is a pretty fair slice, a large helping, out of the short span of earthly life. Why, it covers the whole of an undergraduate's career; it converts the newly-entered maiden of Newnham, the fresh-girl, into a high wrangler, at mention of whose name the Senior Moderator raises his cap, and the undergraduates in the gallery shout. In three years Jack may become famous, and Jill may go through all the soft emotions which belong to love and courtship and a *trousseau* and a wedding-ring, and from a girl become a matron and a mother. There is not the quietest village in the most secluded part of England which does not see changes in three years. Even the last century, which seems to us so steadfast and so unchanging, had its freaks and its frolics, and could not be trusted for three years together.

As for the village, things were at first dreadful for flatness. All the lads gone away—Will to Shanghai, Allen to London, Olinthus to the glory of Chambers. The weariness which fell upon Claire could be felt; it was like Egyptian darkness or a London fog, a weariness which could not be shaken off. In the morning the girl looked at her father with eyes which confessed the tedium of the day; in the evening they looked at each other with a kind of wonder that it had been got through.

'Is it possible,' asked Claire, 'that Will should have gone to China and Allen to London?'

'All the young men of this country go to China or to London,' said Hector, with the air of one who has made a new epigram, and thinks it ought to be remembered.

'And the girls all wait at home, I suppose!' said Claire with a sigh.

'The statue of Patience, my daughter,' replied her father, 'has her lips closed, her eyes fixed, her head a little on one side, and one forefinger raised. She does not talk, she does not grumble; she waits.'

'And we, too, wait, do we not?' said Claire. 'We wait for the boys to succeed.'

'We wait for more,' replied the man of Revolutions, 'than the success of a boy; we wait, my child, for the Leader of the People.'

Nothing could persuade Claire that Allen was ever going to be a Leader of the People, but yet she waited for great things. Allen was to become a great poet; Will, whatever he could in the way of greatness. Somehow, the two boys, she was perfectly certain, would achieve distinction.

If you come to consider, it is really a very bold thing to a boy on the back and bid him to go out into the worl achieve greatness; it is so bold as to seem in the eyes of a r village presumptuous. Shall little Billy become Billy the G Ridiculous! Why, what is his father? Who was his mo Did not his grandfather keep a draper's shop? Billy pre to entertain ambition? As for the lad, aspiring Billy, wh he succeed or whether he fail, it is a magnificent thing to even attempted, and nothing better could have happene the boy. And as for the nation, everybody must admit th is a highly important thing for the nation to get great wherever they come from. At the present juncture, for inst when most greatnesses seem courtesy titles, or Brumm assumptions, we really do want two or three more great badly.

Could we not have a School for Great Men, just as they to have a School of Prophets? They would teach on a scale exactly what Hector taught the two boys on a small, with the addition of eloquence. They would be taught to sp they would be taught to study mankind at first hand and by reports and journals; they would be taught to write reason, to investigate; above all, they would be taught remarkable history, the history of Progress; and in this v they would learn what mankind have already got and what th still want. Think of the interest with which we should rega the appearance of each newly-finished pupil! With wh expectations should we gaze upon him as he stepped majestica from the portals of the College, turned out complete, fu equipped, great enough for anything! Of course he wo begin by being presented at Court, and wherever he appeared the people would crowd to look upon him and to hooray. In fact, he would occupy exactly the place of a young king, but with more power than ever young king possessed. Of course, too, he would begin by being created Duke: that is the least you can do for a great man; but if he should happen not to fulfil his promise, he would be gradually lowered in rank until he reached plain Mister, after which he would be invited to take his seat on the back benches and be quiet for the future.

Let us found such a School.

They waited, this pair, for events which certainly could not occur for some time: yet greatness may be foreshadowed,

'Allen may not,' said Claire, 'step into the first rank all at once.'

'Before the bâton,' said her father, 'comes the tambour.'

'And Will?' Claire asked. 'What is Will to do?'

'He will become rich,' said her father. 'He will become, so many of his unfortunate countrymen, enormously rich.'

ily work, especially school work, keeps the thoughts from ng too much on hopes and aspirations. They are not wise e they lead one to expect too much, and to cause dis- tment where one ought to rejoice. For instance, it is not one who can be a Fielding, but it is possible for many to sser artists in the same walk. And then—in nine months the boys went away—an event happened—a stupendous

Not the kind of event which they were looking for or g. It was not connected with the boys. It was so great nt that it transformed Hector in the eyes of the residents t little French schoolmaster of no account whatever into a whose opinions were extremely valuable. More than Claire herself, hitherto of no more account than her father, ss in the eyes of some, although she was pretty, and there- angerous, became a young lady of great importance. Those before this event downcried her beauty and whispered ul things, especially Olinthus's sisters, now became her enthusiastic admirers. You think, perhaps, that Hector on re-wrote and published his long-lost poems. No, my t. First of all those poems were hopelessly lost—even the had forgotten them. Secondly, in a suburban village, e residents are composed entirely of City people, a reputa- or wisdom is not to be established by a volume of poems: not by a waggon-load of original literature. Think you the good people of Edmonton ever troubled their heads the opinions and habits of Charles Lamb? Shakespeare l doubtless have been esteemed on account of his great ical knowledge. Besides, he made money. There is only vay by which among these people a man arrives at greatness must have made money, or he must have lost money. We heard that Hector had an elder brother interested in beds. brother accumulated, in the thrifty French fashion, a pretty considerable fortune. He was a widower, and childless; and one day, greatly to his own surprise, for he was as yet on the sunny side of sixty, he had to stay in his own bed, and presently found himself compelled to retire from business, and change his residence for Père La Chaise. Hector knew nothing of this event until he one morning received a great letter, on blue paper, which had been blotted after the manner of the ancients, viz. by the use of powder. It was from a notary. It informed him of this lamentable event, and requested him to repair to Paris as soon as might be convenient, with a view to taking over the inheritance.

'He is dead!' Hector wiped the tributary tear. 'Claire, the good brother is dead. You have lost your uncle, whom you have never seen. He would have loved you, my child. The good brother! But for him my poems would never have seen the light. And he is dead! In France we have but one brother. In this country most men have many. Where there are but two, they love each other. He printed my poems for me. When I fled the country he sent me money. Long ago he would have me return; but I was married. I was *père de famille*: besides, what could I do in France? I was too old for the law. I remained. It is ten years since he wrote to me that he wished to embrace me, and that whenever the vast interests of his *magasin* allowed, he would brave the perils of the voyage and come to see me. I expected him from year to year. He did not come. But the intention, my daughter, remains. *Ce pauvre Achille.* He had not ideas; he was not a Republican; he loved not the people! Even he was *bourgeois*—Monsieur Prud'homme—but of a good heart. Ah! yes, of a good heart. And he is dead.'

He remembered that he was invited to go to Paris without delay. The prospect of seeing Paris once more greatly excited him. Should he go in disguise? No: thirty years had disguised him sufficiently. Besides, the Empire was succeeded by a Republic. Should he take a false name? No: the *mouchards* are dispersed, and Cayenne receives no longer the *déportés.* He would go boldly under his own name. Once more he would stand in the streets of Paris—Philipon of the Barricades.

He started the same evening. No official notice, no recognition at all, was taken of his return; in fact, he felt hurt at the neglect. After so many years of exile, voluntary or compulsory, one might have expected something.

He was detained in Paris three weeks. When he returned he informed his daughter, without exultation, and even with sadness, that he had become the master of what he called a colossal fortune.

In fact, the sale of the *magasin de literie* and the inheritance of a great many thousand francs made the French master what is called by our neighbours a millionaire; he had, that is, about a million of francs. It looks a good big sum, but is not so big when you translate it into pounds sterling, when from a million it becomes forty thousand, and at three per cent. represents twelve hundred pounds a year. This is not a colossal income in some men's eyes. Enough to provide a young man of the present generation for a few years with champagne for luncheon, dinner, and supper, stalls at the theatre, trifling presents for young ladies on the stage, and light literature. But for this modest household the wealth was indeed colossal. Claire's brain reeled. It seemed as if the possession of an income so immense would be an intolerable burden. One requires educa-

tion for a big fortune. Sit down, brother of mine, whose income tax remains small, whatever rate Mr. Gladstone may impose, and consider what you would do if you were to become the possessor, say, of twenty thousand pounds a year. You cannot eat more than you do now; you might drink more, but it would not be good for you; you do not want to dress yourself any finer; you do not wish to dazzle your friends with the splendour of your wife's dresses; you would not desire to give entertainments; you do not want to keep a troop of hulking servants. What would you do, in short, with so great an income? Something of this difficulty presented itself to Hector Philipon. He had been living for many years on an income so small as to be hardly worth naming. His poverty, had it not been for his extremely simple and careful habits and his taste for gardening, would have been intolerable. Now, he was going to possess an income of no less than twelve hundred pounds a year.

'Twelve hundred pounds a year!' Claire cried, with a feeling of bewilderment at the impossibility, the sheer impossibility, of having so much money to spend.

'Trente mille francs!' said her father. 'Mon Dieu! One reads in Balzac of such a fortune. Monte Christo, even, I believe, had more.'

'What shall we do with it?' asked Claire. 'What can we do with such a sum?'

'It is the question which I have put to myself continually, since I comprehended the situation. Let us sit down, my daughter, and consider.'

They both sat down with faces full of anxiety.

'You were not brought up, my child, to feel the want of wealth. We were poor; we should continue poor. Sometimes I felt that when I should die there would be the sorrow that you would be left alone—and poor. But there are the boys; one of them, I thought——'

'Oh, father!'

'They love you, Claire. Now all is changed. There is no longer anxiety. We are rich. We ought to be happy, but I feel sad.'

'If it had been only two hundred a year now.'

'Ah! with two hundred pounds—five thousand francs—a year, one can do so much. One is rich already. But with——' Here he sighed heavily, and stopped short. He did not like to contemplate the income in its hideous vastness.

'What shall we do with it?' repeated Claire. 'Can we give some of it to Allen?'

'To Allen! Would you, child, destroy a young man's career at the outset by giving him the means of support? Never. Never.'

Then he looked round him and said softly, 'Let us gradually accustom ourselves to the possession of wealth. Let us think,

Claire, how rich people live. In the first place, they do not live in a cottage. Do you find this cottage grown suddenly small?'

Odd, Claire had never felt it before, but the cottage *was* small.

'I suppose it is small,' she said, with hesitation.

'You perceive it for the first time,' her father replied, gloomily. 'This is the corruption of simplicity which comes with gold. We are dissatisfied with our house. And the furniture, my daughter, does it not appear to you that it is old and worn?'

It was. Claire had never remarked the fact before; but she now perceived clearly that there was no longer any possibility of tracing the pattern of the carpet, that the curtains were dingy, the coverings of the chairs faded, the table rickety.

'The poor old furniture!' said Claire, 'must that go? Yet it is frightfully shabby.'

'The poison is eating into our souls,' her father went on with deeper gloom. 'For twenty years and more I have thought this little *salon* a model of good taste. Claire, when we go into a large house, we will keep the old furniture all in a room by itself, whither we can go and remind ourselves of the past. If we are to be rich, we must never forget that we were once poor and happy.' He uttered this absurd sentiment with great sadness, and, indeed, his thoughts were gone back to the days when he was poor and yet really happy, with a wife and a little girl. The furniture was fuller of associations to him than it was even to Claire.

'It is where the boys have always sat,' he went on. 'Claire, will they know us again if we have a new carpet? Bah! we are rich.' He meant that it was now necessary to crush sentiment. 'Do rich young ladies,' he asked, 'have such a piano as that?'

Claire could have wept. All the illusions of her youth were slipping from her. No: the piano was a very, very old one; it had been her mother's; it required now the most delicate figering to keep down the stridency of age.

'My poor piano! I learned to play upon it. But I *should* like a new one.'

'And your dress, my child. Your dress! Ah! There I am consoled. I would dress thee in silk, in violet, with lace, with jewels,—can there be, anywhere, stuff too beautiful for my beautiful daughter?' He kissed her fingers. 'You shall be Parisienne in dress, as you are Anglaise in goodness.'

'And for yourself, *mon père*? Your own dress. I am sure that coat is threadbare.'

'It is; like all the friends of poverty, I will discard it. Yet I have loved this coat for many years. I know, Claire,' he answered her eyes, 'I perceive, for the first time, that it is threadbare and the cuffs are shiny. Had we continued poor, I

should not have perceived this for some years to come. Be assured, I will discard the old friend, the old coat.'

'And those two bookshelves—' Claire went on——

They contained the library of the cottage. Two shelves only. A small collection for a philosopher.

'Yes, Claire,' her father said with a sigh. 'There was a time when I dreamed of having a library. If I had remained in Paris as an *avocat*, I should have become a bibliophile. Now I have two rows of books, and I am accustomed to have no more. It is a scanty library—*Enfin!*' He shrugged his shoulders.

'*Enfin*,' repeated Claire, 'you can buy a library.'

'Marvellous!' He had not yet comprehended half the power of wealth. 'So I can. Not all at once. I will have catalogues sent to me; the booksellers shall send me catalogues, notices of sale, and offers. I will select. I will collect.'

It will be seen that here was already opened a door for the spending of the whole income on one object.

'Then,' said Claire, descending to practical details, 'we shall want a new set of garden tools.'

'And you will want three servants at least,' said her father. 'It will be one of the anxieties of wealth to maintain a cook, a *bonne*, and a *femme de chambre*.'

'And a boy to help you in the garden.'

'You will want a conservatory,' said Hector.

'And you will want a new dressing-gown. And, oh! do you think that rich people wear a blouse when they work in the garden?'

'The question of the blouse shall be reserved,' said Hector.

'I suppose,' said Claire, 'that we shall not be expected to eat or drink any more than before?'

'Rich men drink sherry, Chambertin, and champagne, but we will dissemble, Claire; we will pretend not to know this.'

'Ah! yes,' she cried. 'Let us pretend, *mon père*. With pretence we can manage to find very few changes necessary. We will go into a larger house; we will have new furniture; and I will have fine things, and you shall have books. But we will not give up our simple life.'

'We will not,' said her father. 'You comfort me, my dear; I feared we should have to imitate the manners of the English rich, and have great dinners every day. But we will feast at times. Remember the great feast we had before the boys left us. Perhaps on another occasion——'

'And you will take me to London, sometimes, will you not?'

'You shall go often to London,' said Hector; 'we will take a *hôtel garni*; we will see all the new pieces; you shall go to the Italian opera; there are concerts every day; and the mass—I mean the service—at the cathedral on Sunday. And in the summer we will go to France.'

'Ah! yes—to France.'

'Not to Paris. My old Paris is gone,' he said sadly. 'It is quite gone ; the old streets are cleared away ; there are broad, straight boulevards. I love it no more. And the language is changed. I speak their speech no longer. *Quoi donc?* Is it that the French of Voltaire is to be clipped of its syllables, and to be spoken with half-closed lips? And the *ouvriers* use a new argot, and they get drunk *à l'Anglaise*. No : we will go to the Loire ; we will visit the country of Rabelais and of Balzac ; we will see Azay-le-Rideau, and Chinon, and Blois, and Tours, and Saumur and Amboise. I saw them once, years ago. We will go there together, Claire.'

'Yes, *mon père*. And—and—and Miss Billingsworth?'

Hector sprang to his feet.

'The respectable, the honourable Miss Billingsworth? I had quite forgotten her. Since the day of my brother's death I had altogether forgotten her. But I can go to her. I will go at once. I will tell her I leave her. Ah! I leave her. At last. Claire, it is good to be rich, because we need no more of Miss Billingsworth. We can mock at Miss Billingsworth.'

'She was angry,' said Claire, 'because you went away without asking leave. I have had to do your work as well as my own.'

'She is a slave-driver,' said Hector.

'Yesterday she sent for me and said that she was considering the propriety of dispensing with your services altogether, as I was now grown up and could take the elder classes.'

'She would dispense with my services!' He stamped and jumped about. 'This is the reward of twenty years' work and more. Ingrate! Perfidious Miss Billingsworth! Aha! No. She would dispense. Grr—r— *Très bien—très bien*—she can dispense. Claire, she shall dispense with both of us—both of us—and without delay. Not a day, not an hour will I consecrate again to Miss Billingsworth and her pupils. Monster of ingratude!'

His first proposal was to go at once—it was then evening—and demand an interview with the Lady Principal, in which there should be enacted a little dramatic sketch or dialogue, with a declamation against perfidy and ingratitude from one actor and the shrinking of guilt from the other. If one or more of the assistants were also present as supers or chorus, the scene would be the more effective.

Claire dissuaded him from this course, but he yielded only on the condition that he was allowed to go to the school the very next morning and politely tender the resignation of both.

Miss Billingsworth, a lady of great dignity and weight—she must have weighed at least twice as much as M. Philipon—expected, when she gave audience to her Professor of French, to receive a humble apology and explanation with a prayer for forgiveness—absence from duty being a sin of the heaviest in

schools. She hardened herself in reply to pronounce sentence of dismissal. In fact, Claire was so good a teacher that she could really do quite as well as her father, and would, Miss Billingsworth thought, come a good deal cheaper. To her astonishment, however, her Professor tendered no apology, offered no explanation, expressed no regret for having deserted his duties for the space of three weeks, and merely announced, in grave and polite manner, that he was anxious to tender his resignation.

Miss Billingsworth replied that probably he had his reasons, and that she had already made up her mind that a three months' notice—

'No,' interrupted M. Philipon, 'not a three months' notice. It is to-day—now—on the spot—that I resign. Accomplished and respectable mademoiselle,' he added, 'it is with feelings of profound sorrow that I lay at your feet so abruptly my resignation. Believe me, nothing but *force majeure*, the necessity of affairs, would allow me to leave you without finding a more worthy Professor to take my place.'

'What affairs, M. Philipon?'

'My own affairs. The events of the last few days have rendered it impossible for me or for my daughter to teach French any longer. I confess that I always abhorred the work——'

'Monsieur Philipon! You—abhorred—the work?'

'As much, mademoiselle, as I esteemed and respected the fair institutrices among whom I worked. I need not assure you, a lady of your penetration, that I shall always look back to my friendship with those ladies as a matter of the greatest pride and honour; that, personally, nothing can exceed my respect for yourself, whether in your dignified position as administrator of so vast an establishment, or as the possessor of so many private virtues and graces. I hope, indeed,' he went on, 'in the future to continue this friendship and to retain the respect of all. We propose, mademoiselle, to reside in the village, principally in order to remain near this honoured Asylum of Learning, and to benefit by the example of yourself and your associates.'

What could the man mean? He was going away; he was going to resign immediately. That would be very inconvenient. He abhorred the work; yet he said these most beautiful things in so charming a manner. Why was he going? she asked him again.

'I repeat, mademoiselle, my affairs.'

'It will be most inconvenient, M. Philipon. Indeed, I cannot allow it. Your salary——'

'Mademoiselle, I hasten to lay it at your feet, with the salary of my daughter, from the last quarter. Since we go, we lose the salary.'

While she was mentally calculating the saving effected by this sacrifice, Hector resumed his protestations of regret and esteem, which she heard in a kind of dream. What did it mean?

He was so polite; he flattered with a skill so surprising; he was so fluent, so completely took away her breath, that when he finally begged permission to deliver a Valedictory Oration to all the young ladies, Miss Billingsworth, without thinking what she was doing, granted that permission.

When he was gone she began to have misgivings. What would he say? He had always behaved with exemplary patience, mildness, and meekness, as becomes a French master. Surely he, if any one, might be trusted; yet he confessed that he abhorred the work, and he had just shown an independence beneath his flatteries which was disquieting. On the other hand, a Valedictory Oration! what could sound better? Many Professors, in her long experience, had come and gone, some of them dismissed for kissing the governesses, and even the maids; others for making eyes at the pretty girls; some for incompetence, some because they wanted more money; some because they lost their tempers, their patience, their heads, or their hearts; others because they fooled away the time and taught nothing; others, again, because they taught more than they were expected or asked to teach. She had had great trouble with her foreign Professors, but none of them, on leaving her, had ever asked permission to give a Valedictory Oration, or left her establishment otherwise than with insolent or insulting language, and with the most lively appearance and outward signs of joy. A Valedictory Oration! It would be a feature in the history of the half-year which could not fail to produce an admirable impression on the parents when they came to hear of it. Once, the curate had given the girls a lecture; but a Valedictory Oration—never before had that been known.

Hector delivered that Oration in the afternoon. Claire came with him to say good-bye to the girls. The scene, and the occasion, and the appearance of their Professor were effective and imposing. He stood at the desk in the largest school-room, his arms folded, his head thrown back, his eyes gazing steadfastly before him, but above the heads of the girls, waiting for the signal to commence. Beside him on the right were the Lady Principal, with the assistant. On the left was Claire, her emancipation made evident by her wearing walking dress and bonnet, while of course the other teachers were in house dress. To her there was a certain humiliation in the scene: she would have preferred a few minutes' friendly farewell with Miss Billingsworth, and then to have kissed a few of the girls. Before the desk were ranged the girls, forty in number. Did you ever consider a bevy of English school-girls out for a walk, or in church, or at a concert, in school gathering, or anywhere?

There are tall and small, pretty and plain, blue-eyed, black-eyed, brown-eyed, hazel-eyed, fat and lean, clever and stupid, clumsy and graceful: all English girls are rosy-cheeked and blooming—that is, nearly all: their eyes are all bright with health—that is, nearly all: they are all well, strong, and full of life—that is, nearly all: but the general effect you will observe to be extremely disappointing; it is an effect of plainness rather than one of beauty, which one would naturally look for. The reason is that beauty is so much a thing of cultivation: it is the product of Art, which a girl has little or no chance of practising until she leaves school. While *in statu pupillari*, her Good Looks are so much raw or rough material—out of Good Looks Art produces Beauty.

There was a pause of a minute or two, while the girls arranged themselves before the desk. Then the orator turned to the Lady Principal.

'If you please, Monsieur Philipon,' said Miss Billingsworth.

Hector changed his attitude. He bent his head, and regarded the faces before him with a tender interest which the girls had never before witnessed in their Professor. In fact, since he had made up his mind to resign he had discovered that Girl was, after all, Woman, only young, and therefore lacking some of the divine graces which accompany Womanhood, especially at that age which Venus made up her mind should be her permanent time of life. Those eyes of his, cold, hard, and unrelenting in the pursuit of the past participle, now beamed upon them kindly, sympathetic, and—admiring. Yes, as each girl in turn met that look she grew at least an inch in self-esteem, because she perceived that M. Philipon admired her. You must not overdo this most effective method of commencing an oration. I once knew a French preacher with a great reputation for eloquence, who always began in this way. After gazing at his congregation in silence for a minute or so, he proceeded to shake his forefinger encouragingly (yet not without conveying some sense of terror) towards three, at least, of the four cardinal points, and then he said, 'Mes enfans.' The effect produced could not be equalled by the finest flow of words.

The Professor changed his attitude a second time. He stood erect; he raised his head; he thrust his left hand into his waistcoat, and laid his right heavily upon a pile of French grammars, dictionaries, and exercise books—the tools of his craft. And then he began, his voice rolling about the room like the soft low notes of an organ.

'Mesdemoiselles,' he said slowly, as if the mere utterance of the word afforded him pleasure. 'Mesdemoiselles,' he repeated, with a gaze of catholic and universal affection which sank deep into every heart, even the youngest. The moment has at length arrived when I am permitted to resign the principal duties with

which you have hitherto associated my name. I do not disguise the fact that I regard this moment as one of supreme happiness. Is it that I desire to cease from beholding you? Never. It is that I lay down for ever the harsh *rôle* of the Professor. *Mon Dieu!* I have played it too long. You now behold in me, for the first time, a son of that glorious nation which regards gallantry and worship of the fair sex as the chief duty as well as the chief solace of human life. Once more I look upon every woman as a goddess.' Here the Lady Principal coughed uncomfortably, the younger teachers blushed, the elder girls looked with questioning surprise one upon the other. So the ox-eyed Hêrè might have looked at the divine Aphroditè and wondered what men could find to admire in her; but the younger girls gazed at their French master with eyes like saucers for lack of comprehension.

'It has been,' Hector resumed, 'a cruel thing to be your critic when I would rather have been your admirer.' Miss Billingsworth began to wish he would stop; but still, the Valedictory Oration, it would be a really magnificent thing to speak of. 'But I am your critic no longer. Behold! I tear off the robe magistrale.' He made as if he was pulling off his coat violently. 'I hasten, I fly, I gallop, to assure you that while my devotion remains, my censorship has ceased. Continue, dear and gracious ladies, without fear of me, to write French according to your own pleasure. What you please must be right. Mingle your genders, exchange your accents, confuse your participles. As Frenchman, as a student of a noble tongue, one may grieve; as a man, I accept your syntax without reserve, or, as I accept your smiles, with the gratitude due to beauty and to youth. Charming angels, whose happy lot it is to emerge from these walls—they have all the seclusion with none of the rigours'—here he bowed to the right—'of a convent—angels entrusted with the task of tearing the masculine heart from the pursuit of wealth, let me in your presence take these engines of discord'—he seized a French grammar—'and destroy them.' Here he tore it down the back and hurled the fragments on the floor, so that the astonished girls jumped every one right out of her shoes, and turned first pale and then red, and first shuddered and then smiled, and first looked at the Lady Principal and then at each other, and first their heads sunk with terror, after the manner of girls at witnessing a deed of violence, and then their hearts leaped up with admiration, as is also their manner in presence of a hero. He had torn up a French grammar before the very eyes of the Lady Principal! Could this be, in very truth, their meek, their gentle, their much-enduring French Professor—this Hector, whose name seemed so much at variance with his nature? 'I throw it at your feet,' he said. 'And this'—he seized a dictionary and treated it in the same manner—'and this'—a book of exercises

followed. 'And now once more I am a man.' He folded his arms and looked around him with the air of Olympian Zeus, or Louis Quatorze himself. Miss Billingsworth was now horribly frightened, but did not dare to interfere. The teachers, observing her terror, endeavoured to assume a smile of pity or contempt. But the elder girls saw through the thin disguise, and they enjoyed the thing.

'Henceforth,' said Hector, 'I can abandon the wretched pretence with which I sought to console myself. I said—I ask your pardon—Girl is not Woman. I said that, in correcting the faults of Girl, I am still free to worship Woman.' Here Miss Billingsworth stepped forward, but he waved her back imperiously, and the elder girls burst into a peal of laughter, and the teachers would have laughed, but dared not. 'That was my subterfuge. I renounce it. I cast it from me. Henceforth I declare, and will maintain *en preux chevalier*, that at every age in life, even in the Pension, woman is without fault.' At this daring statement Miss Billingsworth sat down, and for the first time in the memory of the oldest pupil burst into a loud, spontaneous, and contagious fit of laughing. She laughed as merrily as any of the girls who laughed in chorus; she laughed as long as the youngest teacher, who took the lowest classes; they all laughed together, young and old, one with another. Because, if you think of it, the chief work that goes on in every school, and especially in a girls' boarding-school, is perpetual admonition, with correction, punishment, censure, reprimand, nagging, and fault-finding. Wherefore they laughed long and loud. But the Valedictory Orator did not laugh. He folded his arms and looked benignant. When the laughing had subsided a little, Hector went on, unfolding and spreading his arms as if he was ready to embrace the whole school. '*Enfin*. Behold in me no longer your Professor, but your lover.' 'Oh! good gracious!' cried the Lady Principal. 'The lover of the sex adorable.' He folded his arms again and bowed his head reverently, as if every girl before him was a queen. And he looked so comely with this newly assumed gallantry, his bright eyes and neat figure, that, in spite of his white hair, not one among them all, from the smallest smudger of copy-books to the Lady Principal herself, but would willingly have kissed him there and then.

'There remains,' he said, 'one thing more. Let me ask, Mademoiselle, one last favour. It is a priceless favour. Nothing less than, in leaving you for ever, to kiss your hands!'

'Oh! good gracious!' cried the Lady Principal a second time. But no one could refuse so simple a favour. She was, in fact, the first to extend her hand, feeling that this was an occasion for a display of Deportment which did not often occur. Therefore, when Hector solemnly bent his head and raised those virginal fingers to his lips, she slid back with a majestic

courtesy and bowed exactly like the Queen at a Reception, or at least as much like the Queen as the short time allowed for reflection would permit. The girls laughed no longer. They were all going to have their hands kissed, and some of them blushed, thinking of the ink upon their fingers. At such a moment one would wish at least to have a spotless hand; and some of them who had read romances marvelled that Miss Billingsworth, instead of graciously presenting her fingers, had not flung the daring aspirant from her, saying, in the language of the novels, 'Unhand me, sir!'

. . . . . .

Well, the whole forty, besides the teachers, had been kissed, and their French master was gone, with Claire.

Then Miss Billingsworth, a little ashamed, retreated to her own room; and the girls, feeling sad, fell to confessing, each to the other, how much they had always loved their French Professor, how vastly superior he was to their other professors, particularly Signor Altosoprano, their singing master, who stamped his feet and tore his hair; how they should always mourn his loss; by what slight but unmistakable signs he had always manifested his preference for herself, the speaker; what he had said, how was his manner of saying it, and how they felt when he said it. No more work was possible that day. There was a holiday; they had Sally Lunns and buttered toast for tea, and most of the girls cried when they went to bed.

Next day there was reaction. The teachers were irritable; all were ashamed of the hand-kissing; cold water was poured freely down everybody's back; wet blankets were applied; a vast quantity of girls incurred punishment; enthusiasm was killed; generous sympathy was quenched: and in private with her teachers Miss Billingsworth regretted that she had allowed the Valedictory Oration, and expressed a fear that some of the sentiments were libertine in tone.

A few days later the new French master came. He was young, but hard of manner and testy. He began badly, and he kept it up as he began. So that the girls of that school continued to lament their Hector.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT MONEY CAN DO.

I do not suppose that any permanent harm was done to the morals or to the happiness of the young ladies by the Valedictory Oration and the hand-kissing. But next day a dreadful rumour was spread abroad in the village. The little French-

man, it was said, whom all believed so innocent and harmless, had been dismissed the school in disgrace. Some averred (on the best authority) that he had gone there in the evening, intoxicated with his own claret, and had insisted on kissing all the girls, and all the teachers, and all the maids, in the actual presence of Miss Billingsworth; others declared that he had not kissed all, but only the prettiest out of the older girls, with the youngest teacher: others, again, said that he had not committed this awfulness openly, but in secret, or behind doors, curtains, shutters, and in cupboards, but that the great zeal of an assistant housemaid witnessed and reported his doings; others, again, declared that there was no kissing at all, but that he had ventured to offer his hand to the Lady Principal, who indignantly dismissed him on the spot; then grew up, towards the afternoon, a complete and fully grown romance, in which it was explained that the offence was the kissing of one young lady only, but that one a parlour boarder, and an heiress of surpassing loveliness, whose father had made large sums in jute. The mention of jute and of money fired the imagination of the village, and in an hour or two a perfect little drama had grown up, with action and dialogue complete: how the gardener observed the crime, and went immediately to the operator in jute—the young lady's father—and revealed it, for a large sum of money; how the indignant parent came to the school and said, 'Miss Billingsworth, either the Frenchman leaves this day, or your parlour boarder leaves. I give you this choice.' This thing with variations was whispered from ear to ear, or spoken aloud, or proclaimed from the house-top, until there could be no doubt whatever upon the subject; and Sir Charles asked what was, after all, to be expected of a Frenchman. Then the butcher, the baker, the milkman, and the village draper, examined their books, to find out what, if anything, was owing; there was nothing. Then they laid their heads together, and whispered their own version of the story, which was not so involved, and did credit to their knowledge of human nature. And all that day, which was the most horrible and barefaced thing of all, M. Philipon might have been seen walking about with his daughter, lifting his hat to everybody, smiling, and as cheerful, to outward appearance, as if he was not disgraced, ruined, and his character gone for ever.

'And what,' asked Olinthus's sisters, 'what will our brother say now?'

'Your brother,' said Mrs. Gallaway, 'will no doubt have the good sense to perceive that the shameful conduct of the girl's father releases him from any promise or engagement whatever. At least, I hope so, though there is no telling what the infatuation of a young man may lead him to do.'

'But what will they do? They must starve.'

'Unless,' said the British matron severely, 'the father goes

back to his own country, and the girl goes out for a governess, if any one will have her after what has happened.'

She had already begun to teach, but that was not exactly the meaning of Mrs. Gallaway's kindly speech. There was, in fact, among the young ladies resident in this village, a bogey or spectre, ever visible, and threatening them—that they would have to 'go out for a governess,' that is to say, to take a situation in some family and teach, the profession of teaching being regarded as in many respects inferior to that of menial service.

'Let us, my dears,' she continued, 'be very careful to do no more than to bow distantly to the young person if we meet her.'

A week passed. M. Philipon walked about, neat, smiling, and cheerful, observing none of the glances that were cast upon him by the elder ladies, the coldness of the gentlemen, and the down-dropping of eyes by which the younger ladies spoke their abhorrence of kissing in all its branches. Indeed, his head was much too full of other things, and he did not even notice them. And then happened a most remarkable thing. Nothing less, if you please, than a complete reversal of the first story. They said now, that there never had been any kissing at all; that M. Philipon was not dismissed, but had resigned; that the reason of his resignation was neither more nor less than the fact that he had come into a fortune. How this second report originated, with whom, from what information, I have not been able to ascertain; but it ran like wildfire from house to house, from room to room, from cabin to kitchen, insomuch that there was not a man, woman, or child in the place but was holding up hands to admire, wonder, believe, disbelieve, and be astonished.

'I don't believe a word of it,' said Mrs. Gallaway. 'But, my dears, it may be true. If you meet the girl, you may smile.'

The rumour did not vanish like the first; it was a persistent rumour, it remained; it became certain that there was an accession of wealth. 'Doubtless,' said Sir Charles, 'some pitiful thousand or two; not a solid British fortune. Well, I do not grudge it. He was always respectful, well-behaved, and sober. He deserves it, Skantlebury.'

How much was it? Everybody had it on the best authority that it was so much; but nobody agreed; it was, however, allowed to be something more than a pitiful thousand or two; and most people believed in the solidity of the sum. It was now stated that the fortune was derived from the death of M. Philipon's only brother, and that he was a great merchant, somewhere in France. Great merchants do not always fail, out of the City, and the report gained credence.

'If it is true,' said Mrs. Gallaway, 'it is wonderful. My dears, if you meet the young lady be sure to stop and shake hands with her.'

It presently became certain that the report was true, because workmen appeared in one of the best houses of the village, and furniture began to come from London, and M. Philipon with his daughter went to town every day, and it was learned that they were going to the large house, which had a better garden and better conservatories than any other house in the village.

'It must be true,' said Mrs. Gallaway. 'My dears, this is very good news for Olinthus. He will be much pleased. Write and tell him. And if you should meet dear Claire, ask her to come in and take a friendly cup of tea.'

Quite beautiful it is to mark the rise in esteem which follows an improvement in income. The little Frenchman lived in a cottage: no one cared about the little Frenchman, no one called upon his daughter. M. Philipon was going to take a large house, and was furnishing it and was buying books and all sorts of things for it. He was rich. Thereupon there arose quite a new and most generous appreciation of M. Philipon's character, his wisdom, his benevolence, his virtue.

Again, it is most wonderful to observe how the rumour of riches flies abroad, so that all over the country—yea, and in distant isles—a rich man, or one thought to be rich, becomes swiftly known. It was not long before all those, over the length and breadth of England, who wanted support for societies, hospitals, and committees, sent circulars; men who supported schools, aged widows, institutions, orphanages, free breakfasts, runs into the country, dinners for the indigent, teas for the intemperate, coffee for the convivial, savings-banks for the thriftless, churches for those who stay outside, funds, subscriptions, donations, needs, wants, requirements, necessities, clamorous callings and Great Causes, began with unanimity and universal consent to hurl tracts, send circulars, forward statements, post letters, write appeals, dispatch invitations, persuade with eloquence, terrify with threats, exhort with exhortations, and drive with warnings. He must send large help, his honour was concerned, his justice was involved, his religion required it, his benevolence would be satisfied with nothing short of substantial help, his sympathies commanded it, his patriotism, principles, pride, and prudence, his personal character, gratitude for the past, duty to his children, and his hopes for the next world—all loudly commanded, ordered, and insisted on this help.

Next, every new company who issued a circular sent it to Hector, so that he was invited to drop his money in steamship companies, to throw it away in mines, to give it to the Americans for bogus railway shares, to bestow it upon needy directors in trams, flams, and shams of all kinds, to take shares in the stock of companies formed to prevent a tradesman from becoming bankrupt. As the circulars followed upon one another,

Hector thought the times of the Mississippi shams were come again, and looked daily to hear of some great collapse.

After this the tradesman began to have his turn; and then came from all parts of London and the country, circulars and advertisements of everything known and in use, or possible to be devised by the wit of man, from a corkscrew to a torpedo. And every man in England who was hard up or had a hard-up friend, wrote to him for money in loan, with or without security. They wrote from the sweet seclusion of innocent Arcadia, or from that famous hostelry, the Pig and Whistle, of Drury Lane; they all told a most moving story; they all showed a dreadful monotony in the wording.

'Claire,' said Hector, 'one understands now why the poor think better of mankind than the rich.'

And the village butcher was sympathetic, expecting that, with larger wealth, there would be greater consumption of mutton and beef, larger joints and primer cuts; and the milkman spoke up boldly concerning cream; and the baker thought that more bread would be wanted; and one and all began to touch a respectful forehead with submissive forefinger when M. Philipon passed their way.

Who would believe it? This extraordinary man made no difference at all in his mode of living: he ate no more beef, he continued to cultivate his lettuces, though in a larger garden, he went on with his soup and his salad. There were differences, though of these the butcher and the baker reeked not. Not only was there a better house, with new furniture, a new piano, and new books, but there was also a gradual improvement in the quality of the claret. And the ladies remarked that while Claire dressed no better—because nobody could ever dress better than Claire—she now wore dresses which cost money, and a great deal of money. Who will not sympathise with the poor girl? Hitherto she had designed, cut out, and made with her own fingers every dress she wore; now, for the first time in her life, she was able not only to design a dress for herself, but also to have it made, and out of the most becoming things, without regard to money. More than most girls, she loved beautiful raiment; more than most, she had all her life ardently desired things which she saw adorning her richer sisters because she thought how delightful it must be to wear them. She bought, now, the softest and the most delightful stuffs ever manufactured, and had them made up into dresses which fell in flowing curves—dresses such as refuse to look well on any but a beautiful girl—dresses which made her father's eyes soften with parental pride and joy. What better way of spending her money than to make herself as beautiful as nature allowed?

Diverse are the functions of sweet maidenhood; for there are girls whose work is in the house—housewifely; and these, in all generations will become wives and mothers; and there are

others who love the work that lies outside the house, and these, in the next generation, will become lawyers, doctors, and priestesses. Some are born to be nurses, some to be dressmakers, some to be cooks; but these are very few. Some are born to run after the last new thing, to worship the latest apostle, and to revere the last new gospel. But some, among whom was Claire, are born to be beautiful, gracious, and sympathetic. In the hands of such women, some men develop noble ambitions, some show themselves at their best, and a few recover that ancient virtue which used to be called goodness. Now to be gracious and sympathetic, as well as beautiful, you *must* be nicely dressed; a dowdy cannot be gracious. What is the use of sympathy when your frock doesn't fit? Of what worth is beauty badly dressed?

Another thing that Claire began to buy in great quantities was music. Nobody has any idea how stinted poor girls too often are in the matter of music. It is really almost as bad as gloves. Now, at last, Claire could buy what she wanted, and more than she wanted. She began at length to learn something of the wealth of music. Hitherto she had only played, now she began to study.

Again, she could sometimes leave the dull village and go to London with her father. She had not been to town since the boys went away. There are always shows to see—you have no idea what a quantity of shows there are to see in London every day: some of them interesting, some curious, some ingenious. They went to a good many shows in the first days of their accession to wealth. In the old days, when she went with the boys, she used to sit in the pit; now she went to the dress circle, which made her enjoy the show very much more.

And then she had nothing in the world to do. I have remarked that although many young ladies moan and lament because they have nothing to do in the world, and many will work for themselves and manfully tug a volunteer oar, those who have no choice but must needs work or starve presently get an anxious look, a line across the forehead, a contraction between the eyes, a setting of the lips, a cloud across the brow. Sure and certain I am that whatever be the spread of woman's education, one thing you will never teach her to love the earning of her own bread. I dare say men would rather not work for wage, but they must; and those who do not, take to drinking and mischief.

No one, indeed, could possibly believe what a great big lump of happiness was conferred upon Claire with this colossal fortune of twelve hundred pounds a year.

Even the Philosopher, her father, confessed that, besides the freedom from Girl, he found it delightful beyond expectation to be able to buy whatever his modest habits and simple way of life desired.

It remains to be told, if it is worth the telling, how the residents received M. Philipon into their own circle on the Village Green, and how they related—all except Mr. Colliber, who for reasons of his own was now seldom among them—the story of their failures, and how they all met with the greatest encouragement to go on; and one at least among them, Mr. Massey, senior, felt so much encouraged that he began to unfold all his secret projects and certain methods for making a fortune; how he proved mathematically that each one was a fortune in itself, and wanted only a preliminary advance by way of meeting the expenses of the shove off; how the good Hector listened with the greatest apparent interest, and even suggested branches and developments, not originally perceived by the projector, which would lead to wealth incalculable; how Mr. Massey, whose heart was young though his head was white, began once more to build castles in the air, to kick over the basket of eggs, to spend in imagination the corn in the blade; and how, finally, when it came to the real point, this immense sympathy was found to have no solid foundation, and not a penny of backing up could Mr. Massey obtain for any one of his undertakings.

'No Frenchman, Sir Charles,' observed the Projector, 'deserves to be trusted with a fortune. His only mean idea is how to keep it.'

'I cannot, Massey,' said Sir Charles, 'go so far as to say that no Frenchman deserves a fortune. But doubtless there are few who do, and our friend Philipon, though a most worthy person and sagacious to a certain point, certainly lacks the spirit of enterprise which has made us—what we are.'

CHAPTER III.

THE DAWN OF GREATNESS.

Olinthus Gallaway was destined to have Greatness thrust upon him. The history of his rise and splendour will be here related, partly because it belongs to the story, and partly for the benefit of young City men who may be inclined to follow his example if they can, and so arrive at riches as great as the City heart can desire. In this respect the City is large-hearted.

After the departure of his rivals, Olinthus lingered for some time in the village, thinking that perhaps he might, in their absence, make running for himself. He had an extraordinary belief in himself; he thought that the mere aspect and contemplation of him would subdue the feminine heart; in a little while a reconsideration of the judgment in the case would be held; this could not but be favourable to himself. As for the other two, one was gone to China; who ever comes back from China?

The other was a mere literary scrub. Both as good as clean out of the way. Allen would perhaps turn up to borrow half-crowns. How can a literary man make position or money? Why, said the man of business, he has actually got to do his own work with his own hands, just as if in the oil trade money was made by rolling the casks ashore. 'What gives a man position,' said Tommy, 'is to make other beggars do the work and to pocket the dibs yourself.' The whole of political economy lies in this maxim.

He made, however, little apparent progress in his suit. It was discouraging when he called in the evening to be received always by the young lady's papa, and it was unkind of Claire to refuse to let him walk home with her after church.

He then realised the first part of his ambition: he took chambers in town, and he joined a West-End club—proprietary—quite a new club, and beautifully furnished: and in those days he went home from Saturday to Monday, and called at the Cottage on Sunday afternoon, in order to let Claire know what a brilliant position he was acquiring.

'Our chairman,' he said, speaking of the club, 'is a lord. I have several times seen him in the smoking-room. Last Wednesday I handed him the evening paper. He thanked me.'

'That must have been gratifying to you,' said Claire.

'Very,' he replied. 'It makes a man feel that he really is out of this beastly village and in Society. As for that, a Partner in a really steady thing is sought after, mind you.'

'I can quite believe that,' said Claire.

'Yes: I am asked into tip-top circles in the best wholesale line. As for the girls, Claire, they just throw themselves at a man. I've taken private lessons in dancing. Not that I mean anything serious, you know; but it's pleasant, you know, and the girls are pretty, you know, and that. As for me, all I look forward to is to have my little fling, and then to give up the gaieties of London and take a quiet villa and have a garden.'

That was his simple dream to begin with. We shall see how it changed.

'And to think,' said the sisters of Olinthus one at a time, and one after the other, 'to think that a City partner like Olinthus should run mad after a half-French girl without a penny. Why, he might have looked as high as he pleased after awhile.'

'And a young man,' sighed his mother, 'endowed with every grace! Yes, my dears, it is a sad pity.'

'Only a governess,' they sighed responsive like a chorus.

'And to think that he, when he was told, actually and impudently told, to wait three years, instead of flinging out of the house, should meekly sit down and consent! My dears, I have not patience with men. He ought to have more dignity.'

He was so much in love that he had no dignity left at all,

and began to get thin, and to show other signs of unrequited affection; and what would have happened to him I know not but for a thing which happened which effectually turned his thoughts away from love.

Mr. Colliber, honourable as so colossal a failure as his own undoubtedly was, did not take comfort in his glory. He lamented the old days. Had he been able to show his face in the City he would have begun all over again the game which he had played so well that he left no successor. Although he was now out of it altogether, he followed the money market with as much interest as when he seemed to control it. He was still in imagination in the Inner Ring; he could read the meaning of rise and fall; he could read between the lines of company prospectuses, dividends, and statements made by the chairman; he saw the most magnificent chances offering themselves to one with understanding, and they had to be let alone. He carried these operations through in imagination; he covered acres of paper with calculations; he estimated his fancied gain; he became once more a millionaire; and the only man in the village with whom he cared to talk was Mr. Massey, the dreamer of dreams and projector of schemes, whose brain was busy though his hair was white. Mr. Colliber listened to his ideas, and informed the ingenious projector how his scheme might be worked into a company with money—for the promoters.

Presently Mr. Colliber formed a project for himself—quite an innocent and kindly project. He cast his eyes upon Will Massey, and he considered that boy with a view to possibilities. He was a clever lad, quick to comprehend, with a good memory, a good eye, and a tenacious purpose. He was also a bold lad, and he was poor; he was, further, ambitious, and he had an excellent manner. Of such as Will Massey are great speculators and successful financiers made. How if he were to inoculate the lad with the true spirit, lead him on, train him, and launch him upon the City to be a successor to himself?

He nursed this thought in his brain for two or three years. Just as he was about to open the subject, Will was ordered to China, and so lost his chance of a short road to fortune.

After a time he began to consider Olinthus. Of course he never thought of Allen at all. What have hawks and kites to do with young men of books? Could he by temptation, golden promises, and training, make of young Gallaway a speculator? He did not look clever, to be sure; but he might be taught. And then he ardently desired to possess money; as he had none he wished to appear as if he had; he dressed carefully, and had an eye to appearance and effect. Now appearance and manners are nowhere so useful as in the City. Olinthus affected the air of one who hath great possessions; he spoke with grandeur of their House, which Mr. Colliber knew to be a very little House; his rings and chains were solid; his clothes were

well cut; his hat was glossy; his linen *soigné*; his boots and gloves in good condition. Finally, he had an air of assurance and self-confidence.

'He is a snob,' said Mr. Colliber, thoughtfully, 'but he might pass for a clever snob. The other young fellow was a gentleman and might have passed anywhere for an—an—ah!—an honest man.' He was quite alone, so that he allowed the admission. 'He would have persuaded people. This man will not easily persuade anybody, but he may dazzle them. He will not seem clever, but he may seem solid. After all, it is just as useful to make people envious as to make them friends.'

He began to seek out opportunities for cultivating the young man. This was not at first easy, because Olinthus was at a stage of development when he had no sympathy with the bankrupts of his native village. But Mr. Colliber persevered. He engaged him in conversation about the oil business, and showed that he, too, knew the secrets of that mystery. What trade was there—what business, mystery, or craft of the whole City that Mr. Colliber did not know completely? Then he made Tommy—still artless, for all he was two-and-twenty, and thought he was fifty in worldly wisdom—talk about his ambitions. And Mr. Colliber contrived to let him see how very small and paltry these were. After these conversations, the young man was astonished to think how much he had told about himself, how small he felt, and how little he had got out of Mr. Colliber. He lived, being a widower without children, in one of the large houses of the place; he invited no one into his house; he went to no other house; he shut himself up with his money-market articles, and worked at his imaginary *coups*.

One evening he astonished Olinthus by inviting him to take his cigar in his house. He led his guest into a dining-room, plainly furnished with a table, a sideboard, a cellaret, five chairs, and nothing else. No pictures, no books, no sofas, nothing luxurious at all. Mr. Colliber had parted with all these when he sold his furniture in Kensington Palace Gardens; he never wanted them, or cared about losing them; the furniture of a City office was all that he ever wished to possess. On the mantel-shelf was a box of cigars.

'Take one, Gallaway,' said Mr. Colliber; 'you will find them better than your own. They ought to be. They cost seven pounds a hundred, twelve years ago. I brought my cigars away with me. Will you take a glass of wine? I saved part of my cellar, too. The Gladstone claret was sold for the benefit of the creditors. Would you like a glass of '51 port, or some Lafitte, or some Chambertin?'

'Port for me,' said Tommy, still under the impression that port, sherry, and champagne are the only wines worthy the consideration of a gentleman.

He took two glasses, and was good enough to find the wine silky on the palate, but wanting in bone, phrases he had heard, but imperfectly understood.

'Well,' said Mr. Colliber, 'never mind about the port. Let us talk business.'

'Business, by all means,' said Tommy, taking a third glass. 'I'm a business man.'

'For some years, Gallaway,' said Mr. Colliber, 'I've had my eyes upon you three boys.' His eye upon his visitor at the moment was unpleasantly like the eye of a hawk upon a little bird. 'Young Massey, I confess, appeared to me the best of you. I always thought a great deal might be made of Massey. He is a boy with brains; yes, if I had got hold of Massey, I am certain I could have made a great man of him. But Massey is gone; gone away from London, where the money is. What a fool! WHAT A FOOL! As for you, I confess I have my doubts, and I am not at all certain whether the trouble I am going to take will be made up to me by your success. But we can try; if you like we can try. As for young Engledew, he is a contemptible idiot.'

'He is,' said Olinthus complacently; 'he always was. You'd hardly believe it, but he used to make verses—actually, verses, in the train going up to business.'

'As for yourself, then?'

'As for myself,' said the young man: 'I don't know what you mean by making great men. I've got into a very good thing already, but I suppose there is always something better. And if you've got anything better to offer, Mr. Colliber, that's safe and would not lead to failure, and not being able to show your nose in the City, of course I shall be glad to hear it.'

This was said with dignity, because he resented the injurious comparison with Will.

'You shall hear it; perhaps you will succeed in understanding it.'

'Look here, Mr. Colliber? none of your financial rigs, you know. My uncle is a steady old file. He wouldn't hear of it.'

'Don't be a fool, Gallaway, but listen. I know,' he continued, 'about your partnership. It is a safe little thing, and you've got a small share—a fifth, isn't it? That brings you three or four hundred a year. In ten years or so you may be promoted to a third share, and then you will draw seven hundred or so; that is, I believe, the state of the case.'

Tommy nodded: that was the exact state of the case.

'What I am thinking of,' said Mr. Colliber, 'is very different work; work which, if you can manage it, will give you as much in one year as you could save in twenty; work which requires no capital; which you can do secretly, and which will not interfere with your partnership.'

'Of course,' said Olinthus, 'you mean what you used to do.'

'Not quite'—Mr. Colliber smiled—'not quite what I used to do. Later on you will perhaps understand. I will tell you, however, something of what I did. Five-and-thirty years ago I was a clerk in a wine merchant's office. I was twenty-four years of age: I had no friends or family influence to help me. I was pretty certain to remain a clerk. Then I had the good luck to fall in with a man who began to teach me things, just as you have fallen in with me.'

'What did he teach you?'

'Before I met him I knew nothing. I was even such a fool—he looked quickly at his listener—'as to imagine that fortunes can still be made in the City by the profits of a junior partnership.'

'Well,' said Tommy, 'if they are not made that way, I should like to know——'

'Precisely; you are in the same position that I was. Well, I may possibly—I say I *may*—I do not promise, but I *may* be able to teach you what my old friend taught me. He is now, I fear, gone to a place where stocks and shares are not dealt with.'

'Was it any good when you learned it?' asked the pupil. 'What did it come to when you totted it up?'

'Think now'—he had risen, and was standing on the hearth-rug and shaking an impressive forefinger and looking his listener in the face with his cold, keen eye—'think: I was four-and-twenty when I began. I had nothing—not one farthing had I. At thirty I had a hundred thousand.'

'Oh!'

'At forty I had half a million; at fifty anything you please, with a splendid office and troops of clerks. Nothing was started, no company, or mine, or railway but was brought to me. That is what it totted up to.'

'Yet,' said Tommy, recovering a little, 'at sixty-five or thereabouts?' And he looked around at the plain furniture, meaning that it was all gone.

Mr. Colliber's face darkened for a moment. Yet he reflected. There must be a fine quality of impudence in a young man who could without hesitation fire such a shot.

'At sixty-five,' he replied softly, 'I have nothing, you think, and I have failed. Very good. Never mind how much or how little I have, let us acknowledge the failure. It was a failure which means a good deal more than you can understand. Why, it turned me out of the City—away from the money—can you understand what that means? All the money flows in one direction, and I was turned away from the place whither it flows.'

He looked more like a hawk than ever. Tommy began to think he had gone too far, and took another glass of port, murmuring that it was a generous wine but had perhaps been kept too long in the wood.

'At sixty,' Mr. Colliber went on, 'I was out of it. Well, that is a great misfortune. I have lost the only thing which makes life tolerable. I can no longer use my powers; they are lost.' Here he was silent again and sat down.

'Remember'—he sprang to his feet again—'that I was for thirty years a rich man. You who want to be rich, what do you know of riches? What do you imagine even of the power of wealth? It is not only that you live in a great house and have a troop of servants, and can give great dinners—that pleases everybody naturally—but it is more: you are a Power. You are made to feel it wherever you go: in the City where you are watched and envied: every post brings you letters assuring you of your greatness; you are reminded of it by every man you meet at the West-End from a Duke downwards; by the great ladies who run after you and court you for the money you can help them to get by a judicious interview with a broker. Good heavens! sir, I say that I was a prince for thirty years.'

He paused for a moment, and then went on, speaking in low, measured tones. 'If it were all to do over again, I would do it all over again. If I knew at thirty that I was to be a pauper at sixty and have to go into a workhouse, I would take the intermediate years of wealth and power contentedly. If I were your age and the devil were to stand beside me as I stand beside you'—he laid his finger on his companion's shoulder—Tommy jumped and said, 'Oh, horror!' and then took another glass of port, and said there was beeswing—'and were to lay before me a paper offering me thirty years of such wealth and then poverty and hunger till the end, I would sign that paper with a cheerful heart.'

'I would rather,' said Olinthus, 'sign a paper which made me rich until the end of my life.'

'Tut—tut, you can't have everything. You young men forget that a man can only have what he can grab.'

'It must be such a beastly thing,' said Olinthus, 'to give it all up just when one is getting old. Why, at sixty I should like to put my feet up in a chair and look on.'

'So you think now. When you are sixty you will find that your only happiness is to work.

Then he fell into another fit of musing, and Tommy looked on, wondering why he was invited to hear all this, and what was coming next.

'Not do it again?' Mr. Colliber presently went on repeating himself, 'not do it again? Why, I wish to Heaven I had the chance. Why, is there anything in the world compared with having money? You get the best of everything, the first of everything; you can buy it all. Do you want respect? You can buy it. Or love? You can buy it. Or friends? You can buy them. Or a title? You can buy it. I bought all but the last, and I would have bought that too, only I could not see

how I should get my money's worth out of it. Not do it again? Was it worth doing so much to fail in the end? The more I look at it the more I am satisfied with it. Why, I always knew what the end would be. I felt exactly as if I had made that compact we talked about just now. I knew the smash would come some day. Yet for ten years of such wealth as was mine I would give up all my old age to poverty, even the meanness of such a village as this. For ten years, sir, and I had thirty.'

'I should like to be rich all through,' said Tommy feebly.

'A splendid failure, I dare say. And that is what they remember. A splendid success. That is what I remember. From a clerk's desk to a great house in Palace Gardens; from a miserable shilling City dining-room to all the best clubs in London.'

'If you were so rich, then,' said Olinthus, whose imagination was not easily dazzled, 'why did you throw away your money?'

'I will teach you, if you like to learn, how to win money and how to lose it. Would you like to learn? Do you want to be rich?'

'Of course.' Tommy grew very red. 'Every fellow wants to get rich. But what do you mean by being rich? Is it to run a muck and then fail?'

'What I mean is to grow rich, solidly rich, in a very few years; to grow enormously within a few more; to have the respect and envy of all your contemporaries; to be—such a Power as I was myself. That is what I mean, young man.'

'Oh! I say ——' Tommy grew red and white alternately. 'You are joking, you know, Mr. Colliber. Well—I am not good at practical jokes, and—and—I think——' he half rose to go.

'Shall I teach you,' repeated Mr. Colliber, slowly and coldly, 'to grow rich, really rich, substantially rich—not rich as you and your partisans would call rich, but rolling in gold?'

'You couldn't keep it,' said Tommy, twisting in his chair like a bird uneasy beneath the eyes of the snake. 'You couldn't keep yours, you know.'

'Have you saved any money yet?' asked the Tempter.

'I've put by a hundred or two.'

'A hundred or two! You have been a partner for three years. A hundred or two. In twenty years you may have saved a thousand. You will then be forty-four, we will say. At sixty you may have saved five thousand. Man alive! do you think I came out of my failure with less than twenty thousand? Do you think when a man like me fails he loses all, like a miserable tradesman?'

'Oh!' Tommy gasped. 'But I don't understand. Why should you teach me anything? What have I done? What am I to do for you? You were a great speculator. My uncle would turn me out if I were to begin speculating. I hope you

won't be offended, but I couldn't—really I couldn't—invest my little savings in any project whatever—particularly if it is a project of Mr. Massey's.'

Mr. Colliber laughed.

'You are a cautious young man,' he said. 'I am not going to ask you to invest in any projects, or to lose anything, or to risk anything whatever. I am going to teach you.'

'Is it—is it—difficult to learn?'

'It is a new language, and very difficult to learn. Thousands try to learn it; here and there one succeeds. Let me see if you are one of those two or three. If you are, you have a great career before you. If you are not—why—then——' He shrugged his shoulders.

'Then?' asked Tommy.

'Then you will be no worse off than you are now, and will have gained a little experience of the world.'

'When, Mr. Colliber,' asked Tommy humbly, 'when will the lesson begin?'

'I shall begin,' he replied, 'with an illustration, not a lesson. I shall begin by giving you fifty pounds.'

'Fifty pounds? Give me fifty pounds?'

'That is the way in which I shall begin. You understand English, I suppose. Very good. What is the meaning of these words: I shall—give—you—fifty—pounds? Are you too proud to accept that sum?'

'Fifty pounds?'

'In the City men do not generally give money to each other, do they? Yet I will present you with the sum of fifty pounds.'

There are some things—not things of science—which cannot possibly be explained. For instance, why a bald-headed barber offers to restore your thatch, yet remaineth in his own baldness. It may certainly be for coolness that he goeth bald—yet this climate is already too cold. Or why an old greybeard, by means of alchemy and its kindred arts, offers to restore your youth, yet remaineth in his age. Or why a physician troubled with plaguy diseases offers to cure your ailments, yet abideth with his own. Or why enthusiastic preachers point the Way of Life and Love, yet continue in bitterness to those who see that Way with other eyes. All these things are remarkable, yet not so remarkable, perhaps, in a village where money is vehemently desired, and the want of it bitterly mourned, as to find a poor man, or one thought to be poor—everybody is poor who has not as much as he desires—offering to make another rich. Why not himself? Olinthus gazed in wonder, asking this question, but not daring to put it into words.

'Why not myself?' asked Mr. Colliber, thought-reading like any American. 'If I wanted money in a small way I could make it for myself. But I could never become again the Power which I was; and without that the money would be of no use to me.'

What he did not explain was that not only was his influence gone, but also his reputation, and that beyond the power of recovery. There are still some things which cannot be forgiven; there are some men whom the world, though their eyes swell out with fatness, will not admit among them.

'Fifty pounds!' Olinthus repeated the words, thinking what a lot he could do with fifty pounds if he were to spend it, and where he would put it if he determined to save it. 'Fifty pounds! And to do nothing for it! Really, Mr. Colliber, I take this very kindly of you. Really, to do nothing for it?'

'You think I want you to forge somebody's name, perhaps?' Mr. Colliber laughed in his hard, metallic way. 'Nothing of the kind. Perhaps I want to amuse myself. Perhaps I want to see the stuff you are made of. Young Massey would not have required fifty pounds to make *him* understand what was meant. But never mind Massey. You shall see by a practical illustration how money can be made without trouble, if one has the knowledge. You shall begin as I began. If you choose to go on as I went on, you can do so. If you prefer sticking to your oil, you can do that.'

He then proceeded to inform his disciple, who as yet comprehended nothing, that the game of speculation may be played on a big scale or a small scale, like whist, *écarté*, or any other game. It is played by an immense number of people who know nothing of the 'rules,' so to speak, that is, have no special knowledge to guide them; therefore they gamble like blind men; they may win, but the chances are against them, because their adversaries are players who are acquainted with wire-pullers, bears, bulls, and rings, and make the most of their knowledge. So, in a game of whist, a pair of novices may win against a pair of players, but the chances are against them.

'As for me,' said Mr. Colliber, 'I have been out of it for some years, but I still can feel the pulse of the market. The old knowledge by which I controlled the Stock Exchange is gone, I fear, but I can still put my hand on certainties, and I am going to put you up to one on a small scale.'

'What is it?' asked Tommy, eagerly.

'You are to go to Gedge, in Copthall Lane. He is my old broker. You will give him a letter of introduction. You will tell him to buy 10,000 Russians.'

'Buy 10,000 Russians? What shall I do with them when I get them?' For the moment he just thought that he was to purchase the subjects of the Czar—his bond-servants, not his bonds.

'They are just now $4\frac{3}{8}$. In a fortnight you will call upon him again. You will find they have gone up to $4\frac{7}{8}$. He will pay you the difference, which will be 50*l*. Of course the stock may be $4\frac{9}{8}$, or it may be 5. In that case your difference may be forty or sixty.'

'But suppose they go down,' said Olinthus.

'Don't I tell you, man, that they will go up?'

The next day Olinthus paid the visit to the Honourable Gedge, and with great trepidation delivered his letter of introduction, and made his request for the 10,000 Russians. Instead of being asked to show his bank book, state his income, and give security for so large an order—nominally a million—the order was simply entered, and he was allowed to depart, as if a million was nothing more than a ton of coals or a dozen of sherry. For a fortnight he would be the owner of a million. And then the settlement!

For the next fortnight he watched the money-market article every morning with feverish anxiety. Suppose the shares were to go down! Suppose they were to fall heavily! Where was the money to come from to meet the difference? He lay awake all night thinking of this dreadful possibility. What would his uncle say? And already he saw himself kicked out from his partnership with words of reproach and ignominy. Mr. Colliber had made a big mistake when he failed himself. Why not a small mistake now?

'Don't look anxious, Gallaway,' said his adviser. Do you think it possible for me to mistake so simple a thing as this?'

'But how do you know?'

The old speculator shrugged his shoulders. How did he know? How could he explain? Ask a flint-instrument collector how he knows an ancient spear-head from one of Flint Jack's manufacture. Ask a coin man how he knows that an old coin is a forgery, one of many committed in Alexandria to cheat collectors of the third century. Ask a man in the picture trade how he knows a copy from an original. Ask a man learned in Scarabæi how he knows the Birmingham specimen from a Nile native. Ask a man who collects old silver how he knows the fictitious from the genuine. Ask a man who reads old inscriptions how he knows the genuine from the false. How did he know? Of course he knew. How could he tell? Of course he could tell. Long practice had given him the instinct. In fact, the stock steadily rose. They reached on the day of settlement 4⅞, and Olinthus had the pleasure of drawing that fifty pounds, less brokerage commission.

'Well,' said Mr. Colliber, 'I hope you are satisfied.'

'It is, I am sure,' said Tommy, with the sunshine of content beaming from his face, 'it is, I am sure, extremely kind of you, sir, and I cannot thank you enough.'

'This is a beginning, Gallaway. You have now learned how money may be made without labour. If that stock had gone down four-eighths instead of going up, you would have lost fifty pounds. You may, therefore, learn how to lose money, as well as gain it, without doing anything for it. A great many people are playing this game, and most of them lose. They

lose, you see, because they play without knowing anything about the rules.'

'The rules! There are rules, then?'

'Certainly. But these rules are difficult to learn, and still more difficult to apply. Let us, however, have another illustration, if you please, just to show you how these rules may be applied by one who knows them. Would you like to make a hundred this time?'

'Oh!' Tommy gasped.

Mr. Colliber gave him fresh directions, which he punctually obeyed. He passed the next fortnight in a tumult of hope and expectation. A hundred pounds. This time, however, he was more confident; and at the close of the fortnight he landed his hundred safely, and paid it to his private account with joy unfeigned. A hundred and fifty made in a month by a stroke of the pen.

'At this rate,' he said to Mr. Colliber, 'what is to prevent my making a hundred every week, if you will give me the straight tip? That is five thousand a year. Oh! it costs you nothing. Don't desert me—yet—Mr. Colliber——'

'Not yet,' replied his adviser, smiling icily; 'I shall not desert you yet.'

He then proceeded to inform his disciple that he had seen him through two successful operations, and was willing to see him through a third, after which he would have to begin a serious study if he meant business.

How much would you like to make this time?' asked the great magician, as if it was merely a question of naming the amount.

'Might I say—two hundred?' Olinthus hesitated and blushed at his own boldness.

'Certainly—and fifty,' said Mr. Colliber. 'It is all I shall do for you for the present.'

In another fortnight the young man had cleared that two hundred and fifty. In six weeks he had made four hundred pounds. And he felt as if he had done it by his own sagacity, and as if he possessed within himself the capacity for making ten times, twenty, thirty times that sum.

How small and miserable seemed the oil trade compared with results so splendid! What a future would be his if he could only learn the secrets of the trade—or better still—if Mr. Colliber would go on telling him what to do! Why, a man with that knowledge was a demigod. The oil trade! a poor thing at best, and to end as his uncle was ending, with a square house and a one-horse carriage! Whereas, in the trade of buying and selling of shares and stocks, one might end in Kensington Palace Gardens, with such glories as Mr. Colliber had enjoyed. What a place in which to bestow the beauteous Claire! How splendidly would that goddess become the purple halls and

gilded saloons which might be his, if Mr. Colliber continued propitious!

This was the beginning of all the Greatness which followed. Everything must have a beginning, but most things, unhappily, have an appointed end.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

It is always interesting to read in the biographies of writers, great and small, how at the outset the candidate for glory is invariably received with a most prodigious quantity of cuffs, *coups de pied*, thwacks, black eyes, snubs, disgraces, disappointments, down knockings, out kickings, rebuffs, rudenesses, broken promises, prejudices, cheats, robberies, rejections, woundings of vanity, pullings down of pride, dampings of ambition, and so forth. The most curious thing is that all these kicks seem in the long run to be good for a man. They teach him, I believe, to feel for other people, and so help him to get a hold of them. And presently his wounds heal up and you would never think, to see him now so magnificent and triumphant, that he was once a mere down-trodden, squirming worm. Behold him! He leadeth the people by the ear, just as in old days they used to lead their captives by a hook in the nose, or as all-conquering Venus still drags her prisoners by a single hair.

If one could write at length the story of Allen's early struggles, it would form a most instructive chapter in literary history. Yet there is little that is original or striking in the adventures of a young man come to town with a portfolio full of papers; he has no friends; he begins the battle against unbelief, suspicion, distrust, dishonesty, greed, and all the other giants who stand in the way of a young knight-errant in the field of Letters. Perhaps he succeeds; more often he fails. What becomes of those who fail no man knoweth; it is whispered that they become editors of country papers, or that they go to the colonies and pretend to have been on the staff of the 'Saturday,' or perhaps they fall back on their friends and lead for ever afterwards a broken-winged and disappointed life; who knows? The field of Letters is called a Republic; but I do not know why, because in a Republic all the men are equal, whereas in literature they are all unequal. Perhaps the name is taken from some fancied resemblance to a South American Republic, where the President, or Publisher, whatever he is called, is changed once a quarter with a new Pronouncement. The so-called Republic lies in a flat country without any hills,

streams, dykes, or eminences ; it is circular in shape, and it is bounded on all sides by circles of stone seats rising above one the other to a dizzy height. The citizens of the Republic are always strutting about on the arena trying to attract as much attention as possible from the people in the seats and hoping to see a great crowd assemble, with prodigious shoutings, directly they begin to play their parts : when they are not playing they are standing aside and criticising their fellow actors. Some there are whom no one regardeth at all ; when they come on the seats are swiftly emptied ; these play for their brethren alone, who look on and jeer ; and there are a very few—a happy few—at whose appearance the seats are crammed. Yet all the citizens in this Republic pretend to be of equal strength and give themselves the same airs.

When Allen came to town he brought with him his savings, which, as he had been drawing a substantial salary, considering his age, amounted to no less an amount than seventy-five pounds. He could easily, he thought, live upon this sum until his poems were sold. Of course the poems were most beautifully written out in a legible hand and had received the author's latest corrections. The poems were, besides this seventy-five pounds, all his fortune. Perhaps, when one comes to think of it, any lad who arrives in London with his customary twopence, is richer than he who has nothing but a manuscript, because with twopence you can buy things, whereas with a whole satchelful of poems you can buy nothing—nothing at all. Will a butcher cut you off a pound of steak, even from the tougher part of the animal, in return for a *ballade*, even a ballad of 'Dadoes Sage and Green,' printed on æsthetic paper ? Twopence, it is true, will not go far in steak, but think of the great lumps of pudding it will buy ! A self-made man, indeed, is he who rises in the world and makes his way out of nothing at all but a bundle of poems.

Of course, Allen began in the way common among young poets, that is to say, he sent his verses to the publishers. When the first House refused them he felt a little sorry for the House —they were throwing away their chances ; when the second sent them back he was hurt ; at the third refusal he was indignant ; at the fourth, he felt grieved for the world which was pining for good poetry and being kept out of it ; at the fifth, a kind of dismay seized him. Long before they had all refused it seemed as if the sun was darkened and the moon eclipsed. For he thought in his ignorance as if he alone among young poets was treated with such scorn. Yet he had read history. He lived with the greatest economy and completely alone ; he had no friends ; it seemed at first as if he never would make any friends. Presently, however, he made certain acquaintances, just as one makes acquaintances in a club, by constantly meeting the same men in the same place. He took his nightly steak at a certain tavern ; it was used for the same purpose by a good many men connected with literature, the

press, law, and so forth. By sitting at the same table with these men every night, he got to know some of them. In his loneliness and friendlessness it was something to look forward to, some kind of conversation even with a man of whose very name he was ignorant.

The first man who spoke to him was a man older than himself by seven or eight years; a man of nearly thirty, a man with a very wise and thoughtful face, who might be a great philosopher, or a great scholar, or a great master in intellectual athletics, with something of the responsible look of an earnest student. Possibly he might be a great prig; most very thoughtful-looking persons are; he had dark hair and rather a thin face with marked features. His eyes were dark too and deep-set, and looked more thoughtful even than the nose, a feature which marks the existence of thought almost more than any other. He was a man of middle height; he seemed better 'set up' somehow than most of the men who frequented the place, and he knew none of a certain noisy set who sat together every night drinking whisky and water and telling stories. When he had finished his simple dinner, he used to get up and walk away.

I do not know how Allen first began to notice this man more than the rest; but he became presently aware that, by accident or otherwise, they came to sit at the same table nearly every evening, and one night they spoke to each other, about some topic of the evening paper.

The next night they talked again, and Allen delivered himself of his views, which were those of ingenuous youth and crude. The other man let him talk but said little. The next night, and the next, they met again and talked more freely. It was not difficult to win Allen's confidence, and in the course of a few evenings he had told most of his story.

'I thought it was so, from the beginning,' said the wise-looking man. 'I knew you came from the country. The fact is, except myself nobody at all has been born in London; everybody comes from the country and works his way up. The London-born men, I suppose, go away into the country, and then their grandchildren come up. This keeps up a healthy circulation and gives everybody a chance.'

Allen laughed.

'And I thought, too, that you were come up with ambitions. Have you tried the publishers yet?'

'All of them.'

'Of course. Poetry?'

Allen blushed.

'I see. Still more of course.'

He said no more that night, but the next he returned to the subject and asked Allen how long he had been in London.

'Six months.'

'And all this time you have been taking your manuscript round to the publishers, I suppose?'

Allen owned that such was the case.

'Have you—if I may ask an impertinent question—have you any friends among literary men?'

Allen confessed that he knew no one connected with literature; in fact, that he had no friends at all in London—or, indeed, anywhere else, except in the place he came from.

His friend produced a pocket-book and out of it a card.

'Will you,' he said, 'if I am not again too impertinent, allow me to be one of your first acquaintances? My name, you see, is Lawrence Ouvry, and I am a barrister by profession, but I do not practise.'

He handed his card to Allen. 'Lawrence Ouvry,' with his address in the corner, '15 King's Bench Walk.'

'Thank you,' said Allen, greatly pleased. 'My name is Engledew, but I have no card. It is no use having cards when you have no friends.'

'Will you come to my chambers? I will make you some coffee, and we can have a pipe.'

Allen accepted, and followed Mr. Lawrence Ouvry to a second floor in the Temple, furnished comfortably, and littered with books and papers. Ouvry cleared away a pile from an easy-chair, and rolled it to the fire.

'Now, Engledew, sit there and let us talk.' He went on to make preparations for his coffee. 'I don't generally dine at that place,' he said, 'but I have had some work which kept me in my chambers in the evening, and it was convenient. Latterly, I confess, I have been there every night for the sake of talking with you.'

'I am much obliged to you,' said Allen.

'Yes'—he was pouring the water into the coffee-pot, and spoke slowly and deliberately—'yes, I do think that a man who gets to two-and-twenty, and believes in things as you do, and worships heroes, and takes all his ideas from books, is a man worth talking to.'

He did not explain that this curious and rare creature appeared to him to be also full of thoughts and ideas, and to have a touch at least of genius, and that he was sorry for his friendlessness and for his ignorance of the world. No one, it is true, can help a young writer very much, but he may be helped to help himself.

'It is a mixed lot, the set of men who dine over there,' said Ouvry. 'They are made up of men who hope to get high up the ladder, and men who have got a little way up and there stick. I believe they are all connected, or want to be, with journalism or literature in some shape. And just as in the days of Smollett, all the Scotchmen are physicians and all the Irishmen are barristers; as for the Englishmen, they are of all professions. When men do get really up the ladder, of course they

join a club and dine there. Meantime there is a flavour of Bohemia about the place which pleases new-comers. To be sure, Bohemia never had any clubs. You will not be very long among them.'

'Why not?'

'Because you will get beyond them.'

'It does not look like it yet,' said Allen. 'I have been watching them for five or six months. I hear them talking with each other of finding work, and I suppose they get it; but as for me——'

'As for you, their work is not your work.'

'But I must find some work before the money is quite gone.'

'There is so much to do in literature,' said his adviser, 'that the difficulty is chiefly to find out what you can do best, and what will pay you best. The world is continually crying out for new books, for instance: not books which take up half a man's lifetime and advance things; books to be read and tossed aside; light books, tales, novels——'

'I should not like to become a mere novelist or bookmaker,' said Allen grandly.

'Johnson was both,' said Ouvry. 'But a novelist is not a bookmaker; he is an artist. He paints in every novel a whole gallery of portraits and pictures; sometimes his gallery is pleasing, and sometimes it is not; sometimes he is at his best, sometimes not. Then there is all the periodical literature to be provided, all the newspapers to be kept going; and there are the special papers—law, medical, religious, scientific papers. There is an infinity of work to be done, and it is continually crying aloud for recruits.'

'I am ready enough to become a recruit,' said Allen.

'But you can't find the man with the ribbons and the shilling. Patience. The recruiting sergeant is always about. You will get that shilling.'

'There is another difficulty,' continued Ouvry. 'One may enlist in the wrong corps, and there is afterwards no end of a bother to get exchanged. I know a man who now writes excellent articles on church things—vestments, you know, and liturgies—who began by writing burlesques, and is horribly afraid it will come out some day. Find your own line and stick to it.'

'I write verse every day,' said Allen, blushing as usual.

'To be sure. Capital practice. The man who can write verse can write anything. Only verse by itself doesn't pay, even if you can get editors to take it.'

He then began to talk of the depths—literary depths into which men have been known to fall; of degradations in the literary life, into which men have been forced, which should make young men tremble. I suppose he spoke of these things purposely, in order to awaken Allen from the dream of fame and fortune to be gotten by his poems; how once, for instance,

there was a young poet who had to write a book for an umbrella-maker on umbrella-making, and got five pounds for it; how another was fain to construct a story for an enterprising Soap-man, with an affecting plot and a happy termination, in which the Soap was worked up and made to take a leading part in the *dénouement*, and how the Soapman published it with the name of the writer outside, and an advertisement of the Soap slipped in between every page; and how another owned to having written, for ten pounds, a book of travels in Borneo—never having been outside his native land; and how that book went through four editions, and he never a penny the richer. And how another man, who lived in the back parlour of a public-house, got ten pounds for a job of collecting texts for a pious every-day book. It took him four weeks to do, with constant confinement to that back parlour, close to the bar, and it brought on delirium tremens. And how another man always owed fifty pounds to a certain firm of publishers, for whom he was continually working it off, but never quite succeeded.

Next, this young man who knew so much pointed out many ways in which a beginning may be made. The worst way, he said, was to publish a volume of poems, because no one will read poetry. Far better is it to send a descriptive article to a daily paper, or a critical article, or a tale, or an essay, to a magazine.

'If you really want the literary life, Engledew,' he said, 'make your verse of secondary consideration; you may become a Journalist, you may write novels, you may get up a speciality, but you must not think of making poetry pay.'

'And yet,' said Allen, 'I must write verse.'

'No one wants to prevent you. Go on writing verse. But think of other things. As for me, I have been among writing people all my life. I am one of a family all born with pens in their hands. My father was an editor and a writer, my mother was a poet, my sister writes three-volume novels. I know all the editors, or all about them; if advice will be any good I will advise. But don't ask me to recommend your work to anybody, because if I do he will infallibly drop it into the waste-paper basket.'

'And do you write yourself?'

He hesitated a moment.

'I will tell you some day, not to-night, what I do.'

Lawrence Ouvry, a few days later, found himself in a certain drawing-room at a small house in Bayswater. It was five o'clock, and there were two ladies taking tea, one elderly, with white hair and a beautifully wrinkled face and very kindly eyes, the other a tall and beautiful girl of twenty or so.

'I told you, Gertrude,' said Lawrence, addressing the elder lady, 'that I thought I had discovered a genius. Well, I have. He has shown me his poems; he has come up from the country

to get fame. He is full of ideas, his verses are full of promise; he is quite ignorant of the world, and he knows nothing except from books.'

'Oh!' cried the elder lady, clasping her hands, 'bring him here, Lawrence.'

'I suppose,' said the girl, as if she was a person of much larger experience, 'that he is a gentleman, Lawrence. I hope he does not drop his aspirates like the poet from Shropshire whom Gertrude invited here one night last year. The best verse in the world could not make that man tolerable.'

'Everybody is a gentleman, nowadays,' said Lawrence. 'This man's father was something in the City, and hanged himself because he lost his money. My new genius told me so, with a blush. Showed that the poet's father had the poetic faculty of imagination. He thought everybody would jeer at him; if he hadn't thought so he would have gone on with brazen front. My man's aspirates are fully formed, I assure you. I expect, however, that he has never been in a drawing-room in his life. He won't be uncouth, but he will be awkward. You must draw him out, Isabel. As for you, Gertrude'—he addressed the elder lady—'you will take an interest in him, and you will advise him first, and flatter him next, and spoil him afterwards. But you will teach him things he ought to know. Yes, I will bring him to you.'

CHAPTER V.

A NEW WORLD.

Everybody has envied the feelings with which Captain Christopher Columbus first gazed upon the shores of the new world, or those experienced by the other great explorer who first surveyed the Pacific Ocean. Each, we are given to understand, fell into a rapture or ecstasy in considering the boundless opportunities thus thrown open for the improvement of humanity and the spread of true religion. The picture is beautiful, especially when read by the light of what afterwards happened. Such, indeed, were the feelings of Olinthus in getting a Pisgah view of that enchanted land where money may be had for the picking up. No doubt, like Columbus, he fell to considering what an opening the possession of that land would afford for 'doing good.' Only a far-off view, with a handful, so to speak, of the sacred yellow soil, so fertile and so beautiful, just enough to make him long for more; just enough to make him discontented with the proceeds of his share in the concern, and to make him lose his respect for his uncle, who thought so much of his business.

Suppose a country—the country of the future—in which

everybody was equal, and all had to work in the fields for equal wages. There would be no professions, no learning, no law, no books, and only a few necessary trades, such as hangman, public flogger, custodian of the drunken, maker of clubs, knuckle-dusters, bludgeons, and so forth, pig slaughterer, brewer of beer, and grinder of grain. The trades would be paid in equal wages with the labourer in the field. After a few generations most people would consider it impossible to live any other kind of life. Presently, a fellow would be born with a brain more irritable than those of his fellows—he would discover while growing up that farm work is disagreeable, and work at trades burdensome; he would then make a further discovery, namely, that in order to avoid the fardel and fatigue of life, it is a good plan to go round among the poultry yards and the barns and to help oneself to an egg here, a chicken there, a capon or a duck, a fat goose at Michaelmas, a turkey at Christmas, a ham or a side of pig, a saddle of Welsh mutton, a bottle of cider, a tankard of October, and so on. That man would be the founder of a school, and the first of another long line of philosophers who eat what they have not sowed, drink what they have not brewed, sleep on the softest, and dwell in palaces, all the time with their hands in their pockets. Olinthus was one of that school, that is, he desired above all things to be a disciple. He had learned that he might, if he knew the way, live such a life. But how to learn that way? And oh! the weary round of the daily toil, and the grinding of a tender and sensitive nose upon the grindstone, and the slow returns and slender profits, and the discontent of one who has tasted the joys of making money for nothing.

It was poetical, it was pitiful, it was tragic. Consider. Olinthus had made four hundred pounds—a lump sum of four hundred pounds—in six weeks, without doing anything whatever for it at all. It was done by the simple stroke of a pen, even by simple word of mouth. It was not, unhappily, done by his own skill and craft, but by the help of Mr. Colliber. This was generous, noble, liberal, and praiseworthy of Mr. Colliber. But the same patron now refused to do anything more for him. This was disappointing. More—it was mean, pettifogging, contemptible in Mr. Colliber. Respect could no longer be entertained for Mr. Colliber. Who would have thought it of Mr. Colliber? Why—a thing which actually cost him nothing. All he had to do was to give him the straight tip and let him go and buy. Only just to tell him what to buy. If Olinthus possessed this magical power he would have been too happy to exercise it—when he no longer wanted it for his own benefit—for the benefit of some deserving young man like himself.

Four hundred pounds in six weeks! Why, that was nothing compared with what might be made if one knew just a fortnight

ahead. Olinthus wanted but little : just a fortnight in advance of everybody—a modest fourteen days. Anybody else who pleased might take to prophesying the disasters of the future : he would be satisfied to know what would be up and what down in fourteen days ; he was quite disinterested ; he cared neither for bull nor bear ; he wished to exercise no personal influence at all over the future, but merely to know that little thing—what was going to happen in the next fortnight. It was a small thing, indeed, to wish for ; and yet with all his wishing he got no nearer to it.

Mean—oh ! mean and disappointing in Mr. Colliber.

He went about sadly, hanging his head, in these days of doubt. Once he met Mr. Colliber, and involuntarily raised his tearful eyes in mute appeal.

'No, Gallaway,' said his adviser, laughing, but not merrily. 'No ; it won't do. You would like to go on following instructions, no doubt. But that will not be possible for you. Have you thought over the game ?'

'Thought ! Oh, Mr. Colliber, I can think of nothing else.'

'Is it a game that you think worth playing ?'

'Worth playing ? Oh ! Mr. Colliber. Oh ! Sir. WHAT a truly great man you are !'

He really could not help it. He had been all his life rather inclined to be cheeky—after the fashion of the London gamin—to this fallen financier ; he was only one of the band of bankrupts whom he despised. But now, it was not respect, nor was it gratitude, but it was Awe that he felt for a man who possessed such powers. So may one respect the conjurer who pours wine out of an empty bottle, and turns a pocket-handkerchief into a plum-cake. His words were compelled by admiration of such greatness.

Mr. Colliber smiled coldly.

'You know me now, Gallaway. Not quite one of the ordinary failures, eh ? Something unusual and unexpected, eh ? A man who could make your fortune if he pleased, eh ?'

'If he pleased—oh !' said Olinthus. No prayer could have been more heartfelt or plainer than that simple interjection. Wonderful situation ! To stand before a man and feel that if that man pleases he can make you rich. It recalls the good old days when a king was a king indeed, and could cut off a head, or make a man wealthy for life, at a single word. Olinthus knew little about the Caliph Haroun Alraschid, or King Yussûf Ben Eyub—Joseph Jobson—sometimes called Saladin, or any other Eastern potentate ; but he did feel at that moment as if he was standing before an Autocrat who had his fate in his hands.

The Autocrat rubbed his hands together and laughed again.

'Is it a lively game, Gallaway ? Is it a game you would

like to be able to play well? Is it better fun than the oil trade? Do you like to feel as if you could make yourself rich without any trouble?'

'Oh! Mr. Colliber.'

'Youth is the time for wealth. It is no good for an old fogey like me to be rich. One wants to be young and to enjoy. Why, if you were rich, Gallaway, there is no end to the glorious things you could purchase.'

He proceeded to enumerate some of these splendours, and, I regret to say, included many of the things which the wise man called vanity. But Olinthus smacked his lips, and waggled his head, and rolled his eyes, and gasped.

'Gallaway, you would have all these things if you were rich. But you are not and you never will be; you will go on humdrumming at the oil trade, and some day your uncle will die; then you will think yourself rich enough to marry; you will marry and then you will have a lot of children and you will find out what poverty means; and you will live here all your days and never know anything at all of the things which wealth can give you. Poor beggar! One is sorry for a man who would enjoy the world so much if he had the means.'

Olinthus groaned.

'If you really think you would like to go on with this game, Gallaway——'

'Yes, sir; yes, I should indeed.'

'Then, Gallaway—then—you had better try to learn it by yourself. See what you can do with it; one can but try, you know. Good morning, Gallaway; good morning, my friend.'

Give up the game? No. Try by himself? Perhaps. Yet it would not do to play that game without knowledge. Olinthus was by no means a fool. He knew very well that without advice the buying or selling of stock would be the merest gambling. Then he thought that he would sit quiet for awhile and study the share list. Maybe, by daily examination of the money-market articles, he, too, might arrive at an intuition of the future. To many minds the money-article in the morning paper presents a fearful array of unintelligible figures: to Allen, for instance, it was nothing but an irritating waste of valuable space which might have been much better bestowed on literature. Now if the six columns daily given to the money market were filled with original poetry—his own for example? Most men, except that very small and daily decreasing body who have saved or are saving money, pass by these columns with impatience, and get them quickly to the fires, murders, robberies with violence, wife beatings, and chuckings over the Embankment, which make up the real interest of the daily papers. This had been the practice with Olinthus, and it shows how profoundly impressed he was with the possibilities of 'the game' that he should have boldly begun, and resolutely con-

tinued for some months, a daily and careful perusal of this intelligence. He had not time to do it at the office, where an unsympathetic chief, like his native country, expected nothing short of duty, but he could take the paper home with him, read it in the train, and sit over it in the evening, astonishing his sisters by the unwearying eagerness with which he followed the pursuit of this new learning. A City man, he said grandly, must keep himself posted up in City news. He therefore read through the whole of it, beginning at the general information, wading through the letters and the meetings, following the figures and lists, and ending up with the cattle trade. Nothing came amiss to him, because he had an idea that, by industriously continuing to read, he would eventually find out what was meant by the rise and fall of stock, and why it rose and fell. No student of history ever paid so much attention to the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire. So he read, day by day, how there was ease or tightness in the Money Market, how there was an anticipated reduction in the reserve at the Bank, how a fair business was done in Colonial Bonds, how the Home Railway Market opened firm, and there was a general recovery in Americans but inactivity in Russians, how Egyptian Unified Stock fluctuated all day, how one bank declared a dividend of 15 per cent.—happy bank!—and another of only 7 per cent. Then he read what were the rates for money abroad and at home, and he read how cattle markets were attended, and turnips were firm, but pig-iron in small demand. He read it all and was edified, and then he sighed because the lists which come at the end lay all before him and they had to be read too. He read them conscientiously. Every day he read them.

For three months Olinthus read nothing at all except this one page in 'The Times.' Oddly enough, the inspiration which he looked for did not come. If he met Mr. Colliber, that gentleman would look at him with a curious smile which might mean anything, but did not mean giving any more straight tips.

'Well, Gallaway?'

'I am at work, sir. I am studying every day.'

'Good. Then you have not decided to give up the game.'

'Not, certainly, Mr. Colliber, if I can have your kind assistance.' Olinthus smiled anxiously, but met with no responsive smile.

'Fortune, Gallaway,' said Mr. Colliber, 'helps those who know how to help themselves. Fortune is only another name for a quick eye and a bold hand. We shall see if your sight is keen and your hand strong.'

Very fine, indeed; but what one likes best is to use the keen eyes and the bold hands of some one else.

Olinthus returned to his studies. They were really making him thin, these figures. By this time he knew at least some-

thing of what they meant ; he could connect the price of shares with dividend and nominal value of stock ; he had begun even to remember something of the prices, and to connect one day with its predecessor. If the figures had been in Arabic, he would have learned them by this time. But merely to connect to-day with yesterday is, if you please, a long step from connecting it with the day which is to follow ; and as yet he could not, by any force of reasoning, arrive at a forecast of the next day's prices any more than he could of the next day's weather. Why should things go up and down ? Remember that he was a profoundly ignorant young man, and had never had the least training in social and political economy. Of things learned or serious he had never read anything ; he did not know such a simple thing as supply and demand ; he hardly understood that foreign news influenced stock. All his knowledge of the outer world, in fact, was derived from novels of the third, fifth, tenth-rate kind.

'You are getting on, Gallaway ?' asked Mr. Colliber.

'Slowly, sir,' he replied with a sigh ; 'very slowly as yet.'

'Perhaps the time has come when a little help will be useful. Come over to me this evening.'

Wild hope ! He was going, no doubt, to give him one more illustration. Olinthus kept that appointment punctually. No cigars were offered him, and no wine was produced.

'We are going to talk business, Gallaway,' said Mr. Colliber. 'Sit there. Take a pen and make notes. So you have been trying to get an insight into the money-market by studying the money-market article. Very well ; if you had asked me for help, I could have saved you a great deal of trouble—no ; don't say what you were going to say—your only idea of help was another little pot of money. Listen.'

Mr. Colliber proceeded to explain that to study the money-market article with intelligence and profit, many things unexpected by his pupil were necessary. Very few men besides himself, he said, attempted more than one or two subjects. One man, for instance, would take up railways, and even one railway. After they have made themselves acquainted with the whole history of that railway as revealed to shareholders, they must find out the secret strings of that railway ; more than that, they must find out who pull the strings, and why. Again, the judicious operator would keep himself acquainted with the efforts of the bulls and the bears. How to get this knowledge and arrive at these secrets ? That must be learned by experience. The money-market article, Mr. Colliber went on to explain, records the past ; as regards the future it is dumb.

Olinthus turned pale. How was he to acquire this information and get this intelligence ?

'Oh !' he groaned, 'it was cruel to hang out such hopes.

'Wait a bit,' said Mr. Colliber. 'Perhaps not so cruel as

you think. Nevertheless I am glad that you have had this trouble. You have got some good out of it. You know the jargon of the City article. Next you must learn the jargon of the Stock Exchange.'

'What is the good?' asked the despondent youth. 'I wish I had never heard of the thing.'

'Then—shall we stop?'

'No, no,' he gasped; 'tell me more—perhaps——'

'Perhaps, you think, you may get another wrinkle. But no, Gallaway, no, my young friend, not that way.'

Mr. Colliber then proceeded to instruct him in the manners, ways, and terms of the Stock Exchange, in which, he said, Olinthus must without delay proceed to make himself acquainted. The terms seemed familiar to the young man; in fact, he had heard them in the train on the way to and from the City. For the first evening he understood nothing. A confused babble of words poured from Mr. Colliber, and Olinthus went home with his head whirling. Contango, backwardation, option, whether a put or a call, or a put and call, contracts for account, transfers, taking in and giving on, bulling, bearing—what on earth did it all mean? And he was to understand it all.

Next morning Mr. Colliber began all over again, but with less patience. A week later he was repeating his instructions with the stimulus of certain interjections, words of contumely, shame, and reproach, such as an angry schoolmaster hurls at a boy. It was a terrible time for Olinthus, but he endured all in patience, only he wondered why Mr. Colliber took so much trouble.

The reason was that Mr Colliber, who had at first conceived the idea of amusing himself by training and teaching a financier such as himself, had discovered that his *protégé* was a fool and could never be taught anything. Then he conceived a second and more excellent scheme, which required that the terms, language, jargon, processes, and outward forms of the Stock Exchange should be familiar to his pupil. And this was the reason why he went on teaching him, though fifty strong words went to force one fact into that unreceptive brain. At last, however, his pupil really did know the language of the Stock Exchange, how things are done, and how he ought to talk about them. And he was not an inch nearer knowing why stocks went up and why they went down. Yet he thought he must be; and he made a little experiment. He bought Egyptians—they had been steadily going up. Alas! who can foretell the effect of telegrams? They went down—down—down. Poor Olinthus! unfortunate Tommy! By this transaction he lost one hundred and fifty pounds.

'So,' said Mr. Colliber—who told him?—'you have been trying your luck. I thought you would. Now, young man,

mark my words. Those who attempt to gamble without capital and knowledge court certain ruin. Do you hear? Certain ruin and bankruptcy. It is not a pleasant thing, though you have heard so much about it. How much have you lost?'

'A—a—hundred and fifty pounds,' said Olinthus, looking horribly guilty.

'What would your uncle say if he were to hear of it?'

Olinthus's knees trembled.

'Now, tell me, Gallaway, do you think you know anything at all about the secrets of the market?'

'Nothing,' he replied bitterly. 'How can I know anything? Who was to teach me except yourself? and you won't. You led me on and taught me what the game is like, and then you throw me over.'

'I am ready to help you still. But this time, on conditions.'

'Any conditions. Oh, Mr. Colliber, any conditions.'

And I really believe that had Mr. Colliber produced a parchment with the usual form of sale and limitation of time, and smell of sulphur, and pen to sign in blood, the young man would have signed that parchment, so eager was he to begin to get rich without trouble or labour of his own. But there was no parchment.

Mr. Colliber took him to his home and there, standing on the hearthrug while his pupil sat humbly at his feet, addressed him in solemn words. He reminded his pupil that he had, at great expense of time and trouble, taught him the various operations of the stock market, and put him in the way of understanding the whole business of dealing with shares and stock. Olinthus had followed his advice on three separate occasions with success; and he had followed his own advice on one occasion only, and then with disaster. That, although he had spent many months in learning what he had learned, he was still confessedly no more advanced in the real business than when he began. Further, he pointed out to him that he was now discontented with the slow business and small returns of the oil trade, and continually tempted to repeat the little transactions by which he had already profited; that he had no capital with which to play; that, if his uncle found out what he was doing, he would infallibly be turned out of the house; that, on the other hand, if Olinthus was willing to trust him, follow his directions implicitly and hold his tongue, he would yet make his fortune.

'But how? how? only tell me how!' cried Olinthus, quivering with anxiety and eagerness.

Mr. Colliber, still speaking in the slow and measured way which best illustrates the possession or the assumption of power, went on to point out that for many reasons his own reappearance in the City was as yet undesirable; that if for nothing

else, it would not do for one who had formerly accomplished such magnificent *coups* to dabble in little things; that he was tired of inaction and wished for work again; that he did not intend to work for anybody but himself; that, however, he might find it useful to take a partner who should be put forward as the nominal operator, and appear in the eyes of the world as the actual and sole head of the firm. And, in effect, if he could come to an arrangement with the fortunate Olinthus, that post might be his.

'Mine!' Olinthus gasped, 'mine! you are not joking, Mr. Colliber?'

'Yours. You must understand exactly. I sit behind and pull the strings. You are to have no voice or will in the business at all. You obey. If you disobey, the partnership ceases; if you talk about me, or let anyone in the world know the secret, I turn you out. If you undertake the very smallest transaction without my knowledge and instruction, you go. You will be, in fact, my private secretary, my silent, confidential clerk, my right hand.'

'I see.'

The position was not dignified. On the other hand, if the profits were large, what mattered the position? And nobody would know.

'Outside,' Mr. Colliber went on, 'the position will be very different. You will take credit for all; you will be looked upon—you—' Olinthus thought there was almost too much contempt in the tone—'you, even—as a great financier! you, who cannot understand anything, and have learned nothing except the jargon. You will rise by my help; you will acquire a great fortune, by my help; you will live like a fighting cock, by my help; you will make a great name, always by my help. It will be your interest to hold your tongue about the ghost in the office; you will put on all the 'side' you please—when you are outside the office; and your fortune will go on piling itself up without your doing anything but send your clerks about with my orders and receive your broker for my instructions, and spend the money in whatever ducks and drakes you please.'

'Mr. Colliber,' said Olinthus, with effusion, 'this is indeed a noble offer!'

'I shall take,' said Mr. Colliber,' 'seventy-five per cent. of the profits.'

'Oh!' Olinthus's face lengthened, 'seventy-five per cent. of the profits. Seventy—and what about the losses?'

'Fool' the great financier thundered; 'I said the profits.'

'And—and will the twenty-five per cent.—merely a fourth part—go far to make a fortune?'

'Wait and you shall see. At first I shall arrange so that you may not immediately give up your partnership. But soon

—very soon—it will be necessary to fly at higher game. Is it a bargain, then?'

'It is,' said Olinthus, thinking of his former gains. 'Twenty-five per cent., that would have been a hundred in six weeks. That's eight hundred a year and more.'

'Much more,' said Mr. Colliber.

Then they shook hands, and Mr. Colliber produced a bottle of the famous port, in which they drank together success to the firm. While Olinthus imbibed the precious fluid, his brain on fire with visions of the future, the senior partner drew up certain notes and instructions for him to carry out the very next morning. They were the first transactions of the firm, and the executive partner when he came to carry out those orders was terrified at their magnitude.

He went home, that evening, carrying with him besides the instructions, the best part of a bottle of port. It was early, and his mother and sisters were still sitting up. Olinthus took a chair among them and proceeded, in a voice thick with emotion, to dilate on the power of wealth, and the mean grovelling methods of acquiring it which please some people. What had his uncle made? Twenty thousand, perhaps a little more, and he was seventy years of age. As for himself he had much wider views; he had looked about him; he was not satisfied with the old-fashioned way. Look at the money which might be made by a man who knew how to set to work. Why all the money in the world came to London, it only wanted a steady eye like his own, and a bold hand, such as he himself possessed, to take hold of that money as it passed through London. His mind, in fact, was now made up; he should devote himself seriously to the pursuit of wealth. He intended, and faithfully promised, to make them all rich; then they would leave this confoundedly dull and deserted place, and take a house at the West End, when he would marry Claire, and they would all live together, give great parties, and receive the aristocracy of the country; he should join several high-class clubs and keep a private hansom with a tiger in buttons: he should have champagne every day; he should keep a racehorse or two; the girls should have silk dresses and necklaces, and a carriage to drive in; he should, of course, play loo, baccarat, and Napoleon, all night long with his friends; he should, if he chose, go behind the scenes at the theatre, and——

'Olinthus,' said his mother severely, 'you had better go to bed.'

. . . . . .

About this time several important things were observed by the residents: one was that young Gallaway spent every evening with Mr. Colliber. What were they about every evening? The next was that the young gentleman, always given to self-importance, had now become phenomenally important, with an air of mysterious reserve infinitely provoking to his sisters.

One evening, however, he was observed by these anxious girls, who would, if necessary, have looked through key-holes for the good of their brother, to be dancing all by himself in a secluded corner of the garden where he thought himself unobserved. Yes, he put down figures in a pocket-book, and he danced, with a countenance which betokened the highest satisfaction. Yet that same evening Mr. Colliber had lost his temper and called his junior partner fool and ass ; and Olinthus, instead of rending his chief, meekly sighed and acquiesced, asking for further instructions, and when he got home and found a secluded corner he danced.

'Claire,' said Olinthus, 'nearly a year has passed. Already I am in a position which would astonish you if I could only speak! Have you heard anything from Will yet? But, of course, one can't expect much of a mere clerk. Allen, according to his mother, is starving.'

'I cannot listen to you,' Claire replied coldly, 'until the three years are over.'

Another thing happened next which surprised the residents very much. It was the disappearance of Mr. Colliber from Monday to Saturday. He went away by an early train on Monday morning and he returned on Saturday evening. He had during the week a quiet lodging in the City itself, where no fewer than forty thousand people do have a quiet lodging. Hither came Olinthus in the day, at one o'clock, and in the evening, for instructions.

Well might the executive partner laugh and dance. The business was going on far more successfully than he had even dreamed of in his wildest moments. They had small losses, but the gains were great.

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Let us anticipate.

One day Mr. Colliber told his partner that he was to look out for an office in a leading street on the ground floor. Olinthus found one. The rent was enormous. His partner told him to take it, to furnish it handsomely, to have his name put up on a great brass plate, and to engage half-a-dozen clerks. He was at the same time to resign his partnership in the oil business. Olinthus obeyed blindly: his confidence in his partner was complete: he took handsome offices, bought the furniture, and put up the brass plate.

'And now,' said Mr. Colliber, 'you will take chambers in Pall Mall ; you will join a club—I can get you into as good a one as you have a right to expect: you will drive in your own cab to the office every day ; you will lay yourself out for giving dinners. And mind how you talk. Don't be clever—but of course you can't ; be solid ; talk of stocks, but don't venture to give an opinion or you will be found out ; and if you have tastes for the theatre and things don't talk about them. Keep

them dark. Mind; be solid. Not too many rings; one good ring and a heavy gold chain. No glitter, no pretence; give the best wines and the best of plain dinners. And get as many men with money as you can find to dine with you.'

Wonderful phenomenon! In less than two years Olinthus Gallaway was a power in the City; his transactions were said to be enormous; he was credited with boundless resource, extraordinary knowledge, and remarkable insight. Since the failure of Mr. Colliber there was nothing like it. He underwrote new companies, backed up old ones, strengthened the tottering, undermined the strong, was bull or bear and always right, and seemed to know beforehand the dividend that was going to be declared. Wonderful young man! Said to be under five-and-twenty. So calm and cool in manner too, and impenetrable. A young Napoleon of finance.

You know the story of Sinbad and the old man of the island. How would it have been if the old man had been invisible to the rest of the world, and if Sinbad had gone about pretending to be as free as anybody else, and that the apparent stoop in his shoulders was a mere trick caused by too much study as a boy.

This was exactly Olinthus's position. He sat in a gorgeous office, yet at his side dangled a tube, and when no one was in the office peremptory orders came to him with uncomplimentary expressions. Also he had every morning, before the office opened, and every evening after the clerks were gone, to meet his partner and take his instructions. Yet he was happy: he had his evenings, and besides, he was not one of those thinskinned folk who are greatly moved by being abused. Why, his uncle had often called him an ass and a fool when the income was ten times less.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIRST STEP.

Shipwrecked sailors are always at their hungriest just before a sail heaves in sight. The darkest hour is that before the dawn.

At this moment, when Allen's fortunes were really desperate, and it seemed as if in a very few weeks he would be obliged to go home or else to starve, he had the good luck first to make the acquaintance of Lawrence Ouvry, and secondly, to meet with his first success. And this came to him in a most unexpected manner.

Among the regular *habitués* of the tavern was an old man of seventy or thereabouts, who came every night without fail, including Sundays. New-comers looked at him curiously, and whispered to each other that he had never missed a single night

for forty years, save and except in the month of September, when he took his holiday. He always sat in the same place, had the same dinner, and drank a glass of whisky and water with a slice of lemon after his dinner; at half-past eight he rose, put on his hat, and went away. Where he came from and what he was nobody knew. His manner was extremely dignified; his utterances were measured; and he surveyed the room with the air of Dryden in his coffee-house; he read the evening paper continuously, even while he was eating; he seldom talked to anybody, and his bald head and full white whiskers were as much a part of the furniture every evening as the very chairs and tables. Those who sat near him observed that his coat was worn and threadbare, and his cuffs and collar frayed. The table concealed his boots. It was a matter of surprise, therefore, to John the waiter when this hermit began to converse with a young gentleman newly arrived at the tavern, and when he invited that young gentleman to sit next to him and put down his paper in order to receive his remarks. In fact, the eager looks and fresh cheeks of the young man attracted the veteran at first, and Allen's modest deference to age pleased him. He was old; he liked respect, which is scarce at such taverns; in short, the young man interested him.

'You have but recently joined us, sir,' he said to Allen, when they had got a little past the stage of the weather.

'It is not very long ago,' Allen replied, 'since I came here first.'

'This is the modern home for wits,' he said. 'Here you meet the journalists, the reporters, the descriptive writers, even the editors of the age.'

'Yet there is not much wit,' said Allen, looking round him.

'Hush! You do not listen. I have sat here a great many years and I have listened. Not much wit, sir? The place echoes with wit. But to catch it you must listen. They think I am reading the paper,' he whispered. 'No, sir, I am listening. You are privileged, young gentleman, in coming here. When I was a young man we resented the appearance of a new-comer. He was an intruder unless he was a wit.'

'May I ask,' the old man whispered again across the table, 'if you are also in the Profession?'

'You mean the profession of Letters?' replied Allen. 'I hope to be one of these days.'

'When we say, in this room, the Profession, we mean no other. Other professions are trades. Who would sell pills or parchment? Mere trades. Now we, sir, create; we provide, we invent.'

Surely, thought Allen, this man must be some great author.

'I am trying to find work of some sort,' Allen went on; that is, if I can find any that will suit me.'

'Ah!' replied the man of experience, 'I've gone through

that myself. I was a good long time dodging about and picking up odd jobs. Courage, young man! Your turn will come. You will, I make no doubt, succeed, in the long run, as well as I myself.'

'Thank you,' said Allen gratefully.

Nor was it till the next day that he remembered frayed cuffs, shiny sleeves, and other signs which are generally understood to betoken poverty. To succeed as well as that illustrious unknown! That meant apparently to dine daily for forty years off beef-steak and beer, to have no friends, to lead the most monotonous and solitary of lives. But perhaps there were compensations. There were, in imagination.

A day or two afterwards the old man began again.

'You write poems, of course! So did I, once. And stories? So did I, once. And plays, tragedies, and the like? So did I, once. All that is froth and bubbles. You will settle down like me to something solid.'

He stopped then because his steak was brought to him.

Could he be an historian?

'Young men will be young,' the distinguished *littérateur* went on, after he had eaten up that steak. 'And they will have their illusion. One of them is that it is fine to write poetry and fiction. Well, they soon learn better. In the end they find out what is wanted and stick to that.'

Could he be a Quarterly Reviewer?

'Look here, my boy,' the old fellow went on, 'I like your face. I should like to give you a lift if I could. Perhaps you are getting to the end of the tether.'

'I am indeed,' said Allen.

'Very well. I've been to the end of the tether often enough. That's nothing. It only makes a man the more willing to work. Yes, you are not rowdy like that young Irishman over there—though he's a reporter on the "News" and draws a handsome screw—and you're not argumentative, like the Scotchman, nor supercilious like that young fellow you are so much with. Very well, then. What should you say if. . . . Eh? . . . If I was to say that perhaps I could put you in the way of doing something?'

He nodded mysteriously and for that night said no more. A day or two afterwards he informed Allen that the thing he had in his mind was really coming off.

'What are you working at now?' he asked. 'Froth and bubbles, I suppose, as usual.'

'As I could not do anything with my verses,' said Allen, 'I am trying to write some essays.'

'Humph! Well, they may come in useful. We shall see. Are you acquainted, young man'—he asked the question with as much solemnity as an Oxford examiner—'with the literature of your native country?'

'I believe so ; that is, I have read all the best writers and know them pretty well.'

'And I suppose you don't know any other language?'

'Yes, I know French and German.'

'Do you, now? There was a time when I would have given a great deal for a knowledge of French. It was when I had a chance of becoming a dramatist. At the time, I very much regretted my ignorance of that tongue ; otherwise I have done very well without it. Well . . . . and history, now?'

'I believe I know something about history.'

'It is all useful. About manufactures and arts, now?'

Allen laughed. 'I am afraid I know simply nothing of any manufactures or industries.'

'But—but—but that is a pity. In the matter of leather, now?'

'Nothing about leather.'

'A pity,' he repeated. 'Well, it can't be helped. We must fall back on general knowledge and ability, though how we are to get over the want of experience I can't tell. However, we shall see . . . . we shall see.'

Again he closed his lips and said nothing more. But Allen began to feel that something might really be going to happen. He told his friend Ouvry.

'It will not be anything very brilliant,' said Lawrence. 'I know the old fellow by sight. But it may be worth taking. There are so many things in literature that it is impossible for you not to find something to carry on with if you can only get an introduction or an opening.'

The offer came the very next day.

'I have had reason to know,' said the eminent *littérateur*, 'for some time past that an important project was in the wind. Directly I heard of it, from the very outset, I connected that project with you—with you, sir.' He spoke with so much importance that Allen thought some great honour was about to be conferred upon him. Was he the editor, perhaps, of the 'Quarterly Review?' Was he going to ask Allen to contribute to the pages of a new Quarterly? Allen's cheek flushed and his pulse beat faster as he thanked him for his kindly consideration.

'The project,' said his patron, 'is to take the form of a new paper.'

'Oh!' said Allen, breathless.

'A weekly paper.'

'Oh! and you think——'

'I am sure that you will be able to carry it on.'

'Carry on a weekly paper? You mean work on the staff.'

'I mean, carry on the paper. The paper is to be an Organ, sir. You will be editor, and sub-editor, and staff, and all in one. You will be yourself that paper.'

'An Organ?'

'The Organ, in fact, for the leather trade. He lowered his voice and whispered the words. Allen's heart felt like lead.

'There must be for every Organ a trade editor, who knows the market and can command confidence. There must also be a literary editor, whose business it is to fill up the paper every week. The proprietors will look after the advertisements.'

'To fill a whole paper?'

'Not to write it, of course; but to make judicious selections, cuttings, stories, jokes, anything to make the paper attractive.'

'I see,' said Allen, feeling very feeble.

'I was glad on the whole that you disclaimed any knowledge of leather. Some men have pretended. You did not. Besides, your ignorance will help you to keep up your position. Take care never to know anything about leather and you won't be put upon. In our profession we must despise trade.'

He then began to enlarge upon the nature of Organs in general; they were, he explained, often very paying properties—look at the advertisements. Every Organ, however, had to be nursed and carefully managed, and though the business part was essential, the literary portion had to be considered with much delicacy. Experience, he said, showed what people like, and in that respect it is found that trades differ, so that what attracts tallow repels oil; and what pleases those who advance the interests of malt may be quite thrown away upon the partisans of flax. He would, therefore, have to feel his way.

Good heavens! To be the editor of the Organ for leather! Could there be a more ignoble entrance into literature? Could there be a rung on the ladder of literary success closer to the mud?

'And you yourself, sir?' Allen asked.

'I have myself,' said the great man with pride, 'edited an Organ for many years. It is a large and influential organ; it advocates the interests of—but hush! another day. There are listening ears.'

But Allen never did learn what was the great and influential Organ edited by his friend.

'Literature,' the successful man went on, 'is a great and glorious profession. You are nobody's servant. I go to my office as early as I please and I stay as late. I draw my salary every week and I bring out my paper punctually. I am my own master. Why, I might have been a clerk all my life slaving at a desk.'

That might have been Allen's fate, too. But yet, was it exactly promotion to exchange the service of a City firm for the editorship of a trade Organ?

'Do you,' he asked, 'write much besides your paper?'

'I do not,' replied the editor. 'I have had enough of writing. I have contributed stories and sketches in my day.

But it is all froth—froth and bubbles. Anybody can write. Give me the solid work, editorial work—selection with judgment.'

'I hope,' said Allen humbly, 'that I shall learn in time to select with judgment.'

'No doubt you will—in time. But not if you waste yourself in writing. Mind that: nothing destroys a man's judgment so much as writing. Remember that.'

Not to write! And yet to belong to the Profession!

'As for the pay,' the editor resumed, 'they will offer you, I dare say, thirty shillings a week to begin with. They can't offer less, and perhaps they will spring it to five-and-thirty if they think you will do well.'

'Are you sure they will have me at all?'

'I have recommended you,' said the patron, with decision.

'I am sure,' said Allen, trying to be grateful, 'that I ought to be very much obliged to you.'

'Not at all, Mr. Engledew. I wish you a very successful career, and any advice I can give you I shall be happy to give. John, I will, to-night, take a second glass of Scotch with lemon. At your expense, Mr. Engledew? Well—considering—ahem—thank you—I assure you, Mr. Engledew,' and here something like a tear stood in the old man's eye, 'I assure you that it is more than twenty years since any one has invited me to take a glass of Scotch, or of anything else. Time was, when this room was filled every night with the wits of the last generation, and things were said which got into the papers, that glasses of Scotch were freely offered—but never mind. I hope it is not the last glass of whisky I shall drink in your company, young gentleman, or to your prosperity. I wish you luck, sir.'

. . . . . .

The next day, when Claire was on her way home from afternoon school, she was surprised to meet Allen walking quickly along the road.

'Allen!' she held out both her hands.

'Claire, I came to meet you on your way home.'

'You have something to tell me, Allen. Let me look in your face.'

She looked into his eyes. 'It is something not altogether pleasant.'

'Not altogether, Claire, and yet——'

'Your last letter is two months old. You ought to write oftener than that. Will writes by every mail. You ought not to have stayed away so long——'

'I have had nothing but disappointment. Would you have had me come to tell you of every new attempt and every fresh failure?'

'If you tell me, I can bear half of the disappointment for you. Now tell me nothing till we get home. What a cold

east wind it is! Let us run. You shall tell me everything over a cup of tea. Are you lonely in London without my father and Will and me, Allen?'

There was not the least touch of coquetry in the question.

'Horribly lonely, Claire.'

They ran side by side along the hard road in the twilight like boy and girl. And something of the old feeling returned to Allen.

'It is like the old time, this, Claire. You remember how we all used to run home from the forest, side by side—you in the middle.'

'Of course I do. But there is no one to run with, now.'

The sight of her fresh bright face by itself seemed to soothe Allen. He had come from town in an irritated condition. The printers, who were going to run the 'Organ,' had seen him; they were kindly folk, but they saw in the applicant for the editorship merely an inferior clerk, whose duty had probably lain in the scissors and paste department. However, they accepted him on the recommendation, and they would give him five-and-thirty shillings a week for the job—hours to suit himself. He could not afford to throw up the thing, but it humiliated him. The pay was a wage: the work was mechanical. Then he had seen his mother, and left her in tears because, after all the waiting and waste of time, all he could show was a small post as Editor—a name which conveyed no thought of grandeur to her—on pay which was less than half of what he had thrown over in the City. He was horribly irritated. Yet at the mere sight of Claire his nerves were soothed. He remembered that in the old days it had always been so with her. And then they came to the cottage (it was two or three months before the accession to colossal wealth) and were out of the cold east wind in the little room where they had spent so many evenings.

'It is like a dream to be back here,' said Allen, 'or else the last six months have been a long dream.'

'It is a pleasant dream, Allen——'

He had thrown himself upon the rug before the fire, and she stood over him with her calm sweet smile, and the tender look which never left her eyes when they rested upon Allen.

'You are changed a little, Allen,' she said.

'How am I changed?'

'You shall tell me presently how.'

'At least, you are not changed, Claire. I knew that, failure or not, you would be the same.'

'Always the same, Allen,' she replied. 'There are three people in the world at least who must be always the same to each other.'

'Always,' he echoed.

'While you and Will are fighting your way, I am waiting for your success.'

'Success!' he repeated scornfully.

'Why, of course, Allen. If not to-day, then to-morrow. Do not cease to believe in yourself—and in my father. Do you think he would have taken so much trouble if he had not been perfectly certain that you would succeed?'

Her words fell upon his thirsty soul like dew on the dry land.

'You always cheer me, Claire. What is it? When I am with you I am not anxious or restless. I don't feel as if I ought to be doing something. It is the sound of your voice, or the look of you—and this dear old room. Good Heavens! to think of the evenings we have spent here! And listen! There is the sound of the wind among the trees of the Forest. Claire, I must come back again and dream.'

'Come sometimes, Allen. It is good to dream a little. If it were not for dreams, you would do nothing.'

'It is like the old times. Play me something, Claire, so that I may feel that the months have gone backward.'

She sat down and played softly.

'It *is* the old time,' he went on. 'I have just come back from the City. Don't you expect Will to-night? I have got some new verses for you. Shall we read Châteaubriand? Shall we have a little *causerie?* Hark! I hear Will's footstep.'

The girl stopped playing and looked round sharply. Then she blushed, and went on, but presently stopped again.

'Old times are gone, Allen, and never will come back again. Now tell me, before my father comes home, exactly what has happened.'

He told his story from the beginning: how he had experienced nothing but failure and disappointment; how he had been taken up by the queer old fellow at the chop-house; how he presently threw out hints of work which might possibly be offered him, and how Allen had indulged in the pleasing dream that it would be good work, such as would help him onwards, and how the work turned out to be nothing in the world but the editorship of a trade Organ—that is to say, the judicious selection, stealing, cutting out and pasting together of stories, adventures, jokes, and paragraphs to fill the columns which were not occupied by the strictly commercial part of the paper; and how the Organ was to represent and defend the best interests of leather.

When Claire fairly understood that Allen's first step in literature was to edit an Organ of leather she began to laugh; the more she thought of it the more she laughed; in her sentimental way he expected that she would sympathise with him, and be indignant with fate. But she laughed, and then he began to laugh too. And in this mood Hector found them, and had to be told the whole story over again.

'After all,' said Allen, 'it is something. I was obliged to tell my mother, who recalled the fact that at Brimage and Waring's I was drawing a hundred and fifty, and should have had two hundred this year, without speaking of the China business. I left her in tears. She says she is resigned at last. I wish she wasn't. Resignation is such a hopeless frame of mind. It seems like a breach of the fifth commandment to make your mother resigned.'

'Do they,' asked Claire anxiously, 'do they find the paste?'

'I believe so. It would have shown independence to make it for oneself. And the scissors also will be office property. And oh! Claire, I have so much besides to tell you.'

He had indeed; he had to tell, because he had been ashamed to write the details in his letters, the degradation of his visits to publishers, and how new poetry was a thing regarded by no man. Then he had to talk about the men he met at his tavern, and how they talked. It was all new to Claire, and all delightful: and, lastly, he had to talk about his friend and adviser-in-chief, Mr. Lawrence Ouvry.

'You would like him, Claire, because he is not like anybody you ever met. He takes everything for granted. We always thought it such a splendid thing to be an artist or a writer. He talks as if anybody could write if he pleased. He knows all the great men, and talks as if they were no greater than the small men.'

'Then I should not like him,' said Claire.

'Yes, I think you would. But he makes you feel as if it were all play-acting and he was taking you behind the scenes. And he tells stories—little stories, you know—about the men we have taught ourselves to venerate. He has been kind to me.'

'For that reason, Allen, I will try to like him,' said Claire.

'Thank you, Claire. He has taught me a great deal. For instance, I have discovered that I know next to nothing of the world.'

'Pardon me,' said Hector, 'you know a great deal of the world. I took care of that. You know, it is true, nothing of society. But that is only a very small part of the world.'

'Yes,' said Claire, 'we know nothing of society. How should we?'

Allen passed on to the next point.

'And then he told me what I did not understand before, how to try a beginning. The poetry must wait, Claire——'

'Oh! Allen.'

'Yes; it must wait for better times. Do not think that I shall give up writing verse; but meantime I must try in a different line. Publishers and editors are always wanting what people will read. I must try to find out what they like best, and write for them.'

'Allen, the people must learn to like whatever you offer them.'

'And there is another thing; no man, he has taught me, can help a writer beyond the first introduction. For the rest, he must help himself. I feel a little humiliated, Claire; but I think I am the better for all these lessons. See in what a fool's paradise I used to live!'

He was changed by his six or seven months of this solitary London life; his cheeks were thinner and his eyes were sadder—they were full of his disappointments. And to Claire it seemed a sad downcoming of his lofty aims, not that he should edit an Organ, but that he should be prepared to write what people wanted to read instead of giving nothing but his highest and his best. 'My daughter,' said Hector, 'you do not know that it is Necessity, the first Master of Arts, who draws forth their best from those who have anything good to give, as well as their worst from those who have nothing.'

CHAPTER VII.

GERTRUDE HOLT.

'Engledew,' said Lawrence Ouvry—it was in his Chambers, and the time was midnight—'I want to take you to a house in Bayswater.'

'Who lives in the house?'

'A cousin of mine. Her name is Holt—Gertrude Holt. She wants to make your acquaintance. It is not exactly the trumpet of fame—yet: but she has heard of you.'

'Your own doing, in fact.'

'Very likely. Perhaps you will say that you have not any yearning to go to that house. Wherefore, listen. My cousin is an old lady, and she has been writing all her life. If you ever read contemporary literature—which you don't—you would know her name. She has written novels, verses, biographies—all kinds of things.'

'I do know her name,' said Allen. 'But I have not read her novels. And yet——'

'Wait a little. She is not much of a cousin, pretty far removed, in fact. But we belong to a common stock and we all, somehow, get our living in the Inky Line. She is a dear old lady, and she likes to be called by her Christian name, which I think is a pretty fancy. There is a piquancy about calling an old lady by her Christian name. It is like making love to your grandmother. When you know her, you shall call her Gertrude, too.'

'Well—but——'

'Wait a while. She lives at Bayswater with another cousin who is much younger. She knows all the literary people, except the baser sort and the younger sort, and she receives on Thursday evenings. So, if you go there with me you will meet the members of the profession you admire so much, and see them without their pens in their hands.'

'I should very much like to go,' said Allen, 'but——'

'Hear me out. Gertrude likes to have clever people about her, especially young clever people. These are more difficult to catch than the olds, because young women want them too. Now a young, with all kinds of romantic possibilities, is much more interesting than an old, who has said all he is going to say. You will find her a charming old lady: she doesn't run after new fashions, but has her standards. She knew Wordsworth, as she will soon tell you. She has an enormous quantity of beliefs, almost as many as you have yourself. For instance, she believes in the greatness, grandeur, and immortality of literature generally; and in the glory of the writing profession; and in the virtues of her fellow creatures; in the rapid advance of civilisation, in the perfection of the race, and so forth. Otherwise, she is quite sensible; she doesn't believe in painters who can't draw; nor in poets who have got nothing to say; nor in novelists who've got no story to tell; nor in any beauty except of the old-fashioned kind. And of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

'It is very good of you,' said Allen, 'but——'

'I've given you an excellent character,' Lawrence went on, 'much better than you deserve, and I've promised to bring you. If she likes you she will talk about you and give you the backing up you want to begin with. It is in your own interest that I want you to go.'

'But you have always been preaching that no one can help a writer.'

'No one can in his writing; but people can talk about him when he has begun to write. Don't you see? They can force a man.'

'I suppose so, but——'

'And then, Engledew, it does a man good to be seen about a little and to have ladies interested in him. You must go with me.'

'It seems ridiculous,' said Allen in embarrassment, 'to make objections, but the fact is, I don't like, as we used to say at school.'

'Why don't you like?'

'Well—because—can't you see? I have done nothing yet. I should feel myself a pretender.'

'Why? You don't pretend to anything. You are a simple visitor, that is all. Only we have agreed between us that you are clever and that you are going to get on.'

'And—and—and then,' Allen reddened again, 'I am not even in the position of a gentleman ; I am nothing at all but the editor of a Trade Circular.'

Lawrence laughed.

'I knew you were working round to that. My dear fellow, no one will ask how you earn your daily bread. They will talk to you ; if you are seen pretty often at my cousin's Thursdays, they will remember you ; and when your first book comes out, they will wonder if it is the same man they have met, and rush to read it and tell all the people they know, outside the literary circle, what a delightful man you are to talk to, and how handsome you are, and what great big eyes you've got. Then the outside people will feel what an honour and a privilege it is to know you, and will become green with envying those who have that privilege.'

There were, in reality, two other reasons why Allen hesitated. He did not advance these reasons, but he felt them. The first thing was—the historian himself blushes at writing down the fact—that he had no dress-clothes. Think of this, he had come to two-and-twenty years of age, and he had not even a dress-coat. Setting aside those who have been wrecked in a desert island in early youth, there are really very few who have never seen any society at all. But this could be said of Allen. He never had. I use the word 'society' in its liberal sense, not in that narrow and idiomatic sense which daily brings bitterness to so many households. Few, indeed, are they who can be said to belong to Society, with the capital letter. But we may remember that there is social intercourse, if not society, of a humble kind, even among professional men, merchants, authors, and so forth. One hears—so deeply has civilisation permeated—of dances, music, dinners—they even take their food together—among these people. And yet Allen had never once assisted at any rejoicing, assemblage, or festive gathering of his fellow-creatures. Nobody rejoiced in the village. He had never seen dancing except on the stage. He had never been in any other person's house, except the Cottage, which gave him, outside his books, all the culture and breeding he possessed. And now that there came this chance of going into society he hesitated. Somehow Allen, always reading about men and women, their doings, and their attempts and their ambitions, never thought about society at all. He was still a lad of books ; still at the age when bookish young men read everything and learn voraciously. His books were enough for him.

Lawrence's invitation reminded him that there was a world, an active, talking, gregarious world, outside his books : the world he was always reading of : the world of amusement, recreation, and talk : a world of romance and fair ladies. And now there was an opening, and it made him a little nervous.

He saw that he must go ; yet it was a new thing for him. He knew he should be awkward, yet it would be foolish indeed to refuse.

'You see, Engledew,' said Lawrence carelessly, 'it is just as well to accustom yourself to the talk and ideas of the people with whom you are destined to live. Besides, a man who lives too much by himself loses the manner of society.'

'I've never had any manner to lose,' said Allen, and he understood that the proposal was designed by his friend as a part of his education. He went home that evening with the uneasy feeling which naturally precedes a plunge into unknown waters. Besides, it was humiliating to realise that he knew nothing, absolutely nothing, of society. How should he have a 'manner'? And then one ought to know what they do and say at these evenings. He had read of French salons, and he thought (being a very ignorant youth indeed) that perhaps at Miss Holt's 'At homes' the men would vie with each other in epigram, repartee, wit, and anecdote, and the ladies would encourage the encounter of wits and smile upon the most successful. As for himself he perceived that he must stand in the background and look on. A new-comer would not be expected to distinguish himself.

'I don't promise you a very brilliant evening,' said Lawrence, 'but perhaps the people are a little less uninteresting than at some houses.'

'Will you tell me who they are? It would be foolish to stand beside a great man and not know it.'

'Their names ought to be chalked on their backs. If there are any great men I will find them out. Most of them are the little great men. They rally round Gertrude in force.'

Miss Holt lived in one of the few old houses left of the old suburb of Bayswatering. It had been a small country residence. There was a large square hall with two little rooms on either side ; and the drawing-room, which had been added on to the original house, was on the first floor and had a special staircase. The house stands behind a brick wall with its back to the road and looks out on a little garden.

They went upstairs and Allen found himself in a drawing-room already pretty full of people, though it was still early ; the walls were covered with pictures, those at one end being all portraits ; the furniture, even to Allen's inexperienced eye, was old-fashioned, yet not unlovely.

'Wait a moment,' said Lawrence. 'My cousin is exchanging the usual compliments with one of her old friends. When they have finished I will introduce you.' Allen saw, sitting in an arm-chair by the fireside, a lady with white hair talking with every appearance of vivacity to a man of her own generation, so to speak—that is to say, somewhere well on in the sixties. 'He is an editor,' Lawrence explained; 'he runs an old-fashioned

review. He comes here every Thursday, and they have a crack over old times.'

Allen looked with awe upon an editor; a man who was able to accept and refuse manuscript; who could make a man.

Then Lawrence presented him to his hostess, who received him with a pleasant smile.

'I am very glad to see you here, Mr. Engledew,' she said, with a little more emphasis than she would have employed for a young man not reported to be clever. 'My cousin Lawrence promised to bring you if you would come. Young men, nowadays, are not easily persuaded, except for a dance.'

Her hair was abundant and of the creamy white; her grey eyes were clear and bright; her face was covered with innumerable wrinkles and her cheeks worn; yet it was a beautiful face still, and must have been beautiful in every age. She was quite old now, yet her smile was as sweet, and her eyes as kindly, and her voice as musical, as when she was a young girl, and had never written a single word; so sovereign against the bitterness of age and experience is that old-fashioned medicine called the Good Heart. 'We will have some talk presently, Mr. Engledew,' she said. 'Lawrence has told me about your ambition. You have, he says, a generous enthusiasm for literature. To me it is a dreadful thing to see young men taking up literature as a profession with no more feeling or reverence than if they were going into a solicitor's office. Think of Wordsworth talking of his life's work, as if anybody could have done it. If ever there was a profession in which a Vocation was needed——' She stopped and sighed. 'Do not lose your respect for your work, Mr. Engledew.'

'The least we can do,' said Allen, 'is to believe in the thing we work for.'

'Yes'—the reply pleased her—'without faith nothing great can be accomplished.'

Then she began to ask him, with a beautiful sympathy in her voice, about his work and if he had anything ready, and if he would let her see some of it—all as if she was quite sure, beforehand, that he was going to do something great. And it made Allen feel as if he was already dressed in silken raiment, and set upon a cream-white ass with a crown upon his head, and conducted through the streets of Bagdad as one whom the Caliph was pleased to honour—a strange and delightful sensation. Yet Gertrude Holt was not flattering him. She had lived all her life among those who attempt and with those who succeed. It was nothing strange to her that this young man should also attempt. And Lawrence said he was clever, and he looked clever.

Then other people came, and Allen had to step aside.

'Come,' said Lawrence, 'there is another cousin I must introduce you to.' He took him to the opposite side of the room where, beside a piano, stood a young lady, tall and of

graceful figure, talking to the great editor. 'Isabel,' said Lawrence, 'let me introduce my friend, Mr. Engledew.'

The girl turned the sunniest of faces to Allen, and bowed with a look which betokened rather more than the usual amount of curiosity and interest in a new visitor. This, then, she thought, was the friendless young man 'found' in a Fleet Street chop-house by Lawrence, just as a child might be found upon a doorstep. This was the young man come up to London, after a spell as a city clerk, with a pocket full of poems and not a single friend; the young man whose enthusiasm her cousin Lawrence found so wonderful; the young man whom they were to receive and to form. Allen observed the look of curiosity and blushed; but then he blushed on very small provocation. It was a sign of self-consciousness, rawness, inexperience, and vanity. Isabel thought at first sight that here was a man who looked like a poet. She knew nearly all of the tribe. There are only a dozen professional poets in all London, and only two of them look the part. For a poet may be grey-headed, but he should not be bald; he may be short but never fat; he may wear a *pince-nez* but not spectacles; he should talk well but not with an obvious striving after epigram; he should be sensitive, but not carry his vanity openly on his sleeve for the daws to peck at; he should not be restless but should possess his soul in serious tranquillity. *Enfin*—Allen did look like a poet, even more than the two whom Isabel accepted as equal in appearance to the part. A youth with high forehead, large and luminous eyes not hidden by his *pince-nez*, mobile lips, blushing cheeks, and tall slender figure, and the narrow shoulders which seem to belong naturally to men of books. If appearance means anything, her cousin Lawrence was right, and this was a poet.

If appearance means anything, then, Allen hastily concluded, Miss Isabel Holt must be a very pleasing young lady. The fashion of wearing the hair showed her shapely head, and the fashion of dress showed her shapely figure; her hazel eyes were bright and rather full, and her face was animated and full of expression. I have heard that there are girls who have the most astonishingly sweet faces with no corresponding sweetness of character; but I have never yet met any. There are also said to be girls who have wonderful graces and virtues without any corresponding sweetness of face; but I have not met any. And there are, perhaps, girls—I do not know, there may be—so unhappy as to be sweet neither in face nor disposition. Isabel Holt's face was not classically beautiful, but a good face of the better kind, full of light and life, sunshine lying in it always, brightness in her clear eyes, kindness in her lips, with soft brown hair, and she was dressed as some London maidens with good taste and command of money can dress. She did not, for instance, dress so well as Claire; but yet she dressed with better taste than many of her acquaintance.

'We have heard of you, Mr. Engledew,' she said, just like the elder lady, 'and we are very glad you have come to see us. You have not long been in London, have you?'

'Tell him, Isabel,' said Lawrence, 'who are here to-night.'

She began to talk about her guests. One was an art critic of the latest school, and Allen smiled, thinking of the old old phrases dressed up with the new new adjectives. There was a novelist of good repute, and he looked like none of his characters, which surprised Allen; there was another of no repute who wore double glasses and looked intellectual. There was a bright-faced young man who had made some name as a poet, and Allen, listening, thought that his talk, which was continuous and clear, and as full of epigram as a fire of thorns is full of crackles, was better than his verses; but he didn't say so, because that poet was as sensitive as an Æolian harp; and another poet who had made no name outside the little circle of his own friends, who also bore himself intellectually. There was a big man with spectacles who wrote fairy stories, and a little fat man who wrote the most beautiful love stories; and a retired singer, and a man supposed, like Collé or Tallemant des Réaux, to be writing malicious Memoirs of the Nineteenth Century, and a sharp keen-eyed man from Scotland who was a journalist.

And so on; nobody in the room who had not done something. Most of them were elderly men and women, but there was a sprinkling of girls, so that the room was not without the charm of youth. And Allen observed the singular and affectionate respect paid by everybody to Miss Holt, whom they all addressed by her Christian name. Her chair was a throne round which little groups continually formed, melted away, and formed again.

When Isabel left him Allen retired to a corner and looked on with interest and curiosity. This, then, was society; this was such a gathering of people as he had read of over and over again, but never understood. And no straining or effort in the talk; it was continuous, rippling, and cheerful talk, but he felt that it was as yet impossible for him; they were talking of books and pictures and poetry, but all belonging to the season, and Allen knew nothing about them; nobody—which was remarkable—tried to show how clever he was. There was no epigram and no repartee; they all talked as if they were quite common people, and as if it did not matter at all what they said, and as if the man supposed to keep a diary was not among them taking notes. It was pleasant to listen, and delightful to watch from the obscurity of his corner the bright faces of the girls. But no clever things said at all!

'In these latter days,' said Lawrence, when Allen afterwards remarked upon this fact, 'we keep our cleverness, if we have got any, for our writings. Among literary people it is perhaps

dangerous to be clever. There was a clever talker once at the club, and it was wonderful to notice, until he dried up, how the same epigrams appeared in the leading articles of all the journals and reviews. Keep your good things, Engledew, to yourself, and make a note of all the good things that you hear from other people.'

Allen was introduced to two or three people, but they thought him stupid or shy because he knew nothing of the current talk, nor could he respond at all to the usual openings. And they wondered who this handsome, retiring youth might be, and what was his line. They asked Gertrude, but she only smiled, and said they might ask her again in six months' time. It was, then, only another Inky Boy. But that with Gertrude was to be expected.

Presently Allen thought he saw an opportunity, and ventured to join a new group forming round Miss Holt. She smiled and pointed to a place beside her chair where he could stand. She was talking about a certain diary which had just been published.

'We ought not,' she said, 'to allow the weaknesses of our great writers to be published. It is shameful; of course they have weaknesses; they are men, and they grow old and suffer. Why should we proclaim to the world that a man, whose words have moved the whole English-speaking race, was sometimes peevish and ill-natured? My dears,' she was surrounded by the younger people, 'the greatness of a man is in the work of his life, not in his home circle. We cannot, thank heaven, lessen that greatness by finding out that he was not always unselfish. The work remains, and we ought not to expect great men to be always saying remarkable things. I knew Wordsworth very well, but I never heard him say one single remarkable thing. Yet he must always be to me the greatest and grandest figure, because he has moved my heart so deeply and taught me so much.'

'But, Gertrude,' said one of the girls, 'you would destroy all the Memoirs.'

'They are very impertinent things, my dear, and are only written to make great men small, if they can. What I want is that we should keep the great achievements always before one's mind and forget the littleness. Dear me! when one reads how one great writer was too fond of port and another of tobacco, and another of opium, and another was horribly vain, and another found fault with his friends, what does it amount to? It is, to be sure, dreadful to think that after saying the most beautiful things and putting the most beautiful thoughts into our heads, the poor dear poet should lock himself up and drink gin-and-water, but think of the thousands who drink the gin and do not write the poetry.'

'You would have us believe in everybody, dear Gertrude,'

said another of the group, 'even if he proved contemptible in daily life.'

'Why, my dear, all the more in that case. Because he has fought against his lower nature so as to trample it down if only for the time, and to become noble and great in his thoughts. But perhaps some men are two men, one of them great and the other mean. We need care nothing about the second man, but only concern ourselves with the first.'

Allen took no part in the talk, but he listened.

'Mr. Engledew agrees with me,' said Miss Holt, looking up at him. He did, he showed it in his eyes; but this sudden appeal to him confused him, and he could only stammer a few words.

Then a young lady sang a song to Isabel's accompaniment. It was a German song, full of emotion and yearning. Allen thought he would get it for Claire, whose voice was fresher and stronger than this girl's, and yet, he could perceive, not half so well trained. And then they all began to ask Isabel to recite something. She stood up before them all, and joining her hands recited Browning's splendid poem of 'Hervé Riel.' Allen had never before heard a fine poem recited by a girl. It was wonderful. His pulse beat, and his cheek glowed. Isabel had a strong voice, full and musical; she possessed a fine instinct for acting; she had trained her voice, and cultivated her genius; her gestures, her face, the expression in her eyes, her intonations fitted the words; they did more, they interpreted the words. This is the true power of the actor—to put into the lifeless words the very soul of the poet, the very inspiration itself. When Isabel finished she looked, perhaps by accident, at the strange guest, who stood beside Gertrude's chair with flashing eyes and parted lips. Never before had she felt so strongly her own power. Do not laugh at Allen because he was carried out of himself by a recitation in a drawing-room. Remember that the piece was 'Hervé Riel,' and the artist was —Isabel.

The rest of the evening seemed flat; presently the people began to go away, till there were only left Lawrence and Allen.

'You will come again, Mr. Engledew?' said his hostess. 'I am sure you will like my Thursdays when you know my friends, and Isabel, and me. But I want to talk to you alone. Will you come in the afternoon and take a cup of tea with us? We are generally alone then, and I have such a great deal to say to you—only the advice of an old woman. But then, you know, old women are always wonderful for wisdom. That is why they used to burn us—jealousy and envy, my dear.'

'To go to that house,' said Lawrence, 'and to talk with that old lady is like going back forty years—yes, exactly forty years. Think of it! Forty years ago all the women—except Harriet

Martineau—were religious, and all the unmarried ones were submissive.'

'Are they not religious still?'

'Engledew,' said Lawrence, stopping short, 'you really must not ask such questions. You have spent your whole life, I believe, in a convent among nuns. I shall have to take you to another kind of evening—a Sunday evening with an Advanced set, who will show you how much religion is left for some of them. Let me go on—they were submissive; and they were meek; they believed tremendously in the bishop, and largely in the curate; they thought the majority of men were virtuous, courageous, disinterested, and that they practised all the rest of the now exploded virtues; they were brought up in the old maxim founded on Oriental custom, that a good woman should not be talked about, but that she should be known only as the Mother of the Gracchi; that a woman must not speak in public, but sit in the assembly with her veil drawn closely, hidden from everybody but her husband; that for a woman to publish can only be excused on the ground of great and singular gifts. Gertrude was brought up in these beliefs, and she holds them still.'

'At all events, they have made her very charming.'

'And Isabel?'

'She also,' said Allen, hesitating, 'if I may say so, is also charming.'

'I think she is,' Lawrence said critically. 'Some day, I suppose, I shall marry Isabel. She is a pupil of Gertrude's; she can't write, but she can worship, and she can act. She's a quiet girl, but she has her gifts. You will go there again?'

'I shall go,' said Allen with decision, 'as often as I am asked.'

CHAPTER VIII.

AT SHANGHAI.

To the stayer at home the lot of the young man who goes out to the colonies or to foreign parts appears exciting and adventurous. The very name of the Rocky Mountains, or California, or China, or New Zealand, or Australia suggests adventure, peril, and continual calls for courage, coolness, presence of mind, bravery, and endurance. As a matter of fact there are more adventures, more perils, and more excitements in a year of London, to those who use their London aright, than in any average ten years of any average colony. What could be anywhere more romantic than the prospect opening out before Olinthus who stayed where the money is? What more picturesque than the promise of starvation which greeted Allen! What more dull than the daily life of Will in far Shanghai!

Will wrote to Claire every month ; he had little to tell about himself after the first impressions ; his letters were like his talk—practical, self-reliant, and strong. Allen consulted her, sought sympathy, and wanted encouragement. Will, on the other hand, went his own way, understanding what he meant to do. He asked no sympathy, but rather offered his own. Allen talked perpetually about himself. Will, of other people —of Claire, of her father—hardly ever of himself. Claire read his letters, as she talked with Allen, with a strange and absorbing interest. She was watching the development of two characters which, as she now saw, were widely different. Both of them had said that they loved her. She knew that some day she would hear that said again ; her cheek glowed when she thought of it ; but of her own answer she would not think. She loved them both, if not both in the same way—then—but it would be foolish yet to think there was any difference. At present, at least, they were as her brothers.

Poets and the writers of sweet love tales have all made a great mistake in treating, I think, the emotion and passion called love as if it was exactly the same in the heart of a girl as in the heart of her lover. I am sure that it is not the same. The fierce and passionate longing that tears the masculine bosom is not known to the maid : the young man falls in love—one does not mean the young man who waits until he can afford the luxury of love, and then casts a critical eye around when the people are standing up to sing, but the child of nature—*Homo communis, amator*—because he cannot help it ; then he is seized with a great ardour of yearning, quite regardless of his chances of success. Such yearning it was, such ardour, which the exiled Will had to endure in silence, and not even to let a glimpse of it be shown in his letters. But a girl does not so fall in love ; she gives her heart to whom she chooses, but she gives it when she pleases. This, my dears, is a difference indeed. And those who would confute this opinion must be fair ladies experienced in the emotions produced by courting and billing, cooing and wooing, not young maidens who derive their ideas of love from the novels of men, and of women who imitate men ; of poets, and of women who imitate poets.

Allen brought her his poems—not love verses ; Will sent her presents. So, each in his own way, they showed that she was in their minds. I do not know whether she liked best to have Allen's verses or Will's presents. It was delightful to see Allen's touch grow firmer, his command of language stronger, and his verse shake off by degrees the shackles of imitation. It was pleasant to open the little parcels wrapped up so carefully ; to wonder what was inside ; to find a packet of tea, fragrant, wonderful, such as cometh not to the English market, but is all reserved for the table of the luxurious Muscovian or the Sybarite of Siberia ; the scented boxes in wood cunningly

carved and wrought; dainty useless wonders in ivory; or the roll of delicate web-like silk. Better than the presents were the letters, which brought back to her the strong voice, the brave face, and the courageous bearing of the lad who wanted neither counsel, nor help, nor sympathy. His letters were her own, but she read them aloud to her father, and then sent them to Allen; and she treasured them up carefully with Allen's poems.

'One of the first things,' Will wrote, 'that are unexpected after so many strange things which one has read about is, that the life of the English residents seems in parenthesis. No one seems to be living his own life, but something else—something temporary; as if we were all expecting to go home again in the course of the afternoon or the next day, and therefore it does not much matter what we do just for the few hours which remain; or as if we were convicts doing our time; or as if we were political exiles, who might be recalled at any moment; or as if we were in some way birds of passage. Many of us, in fact, are, and have lived in all kinds of places. The next thing that is strange to such an untravelled man as myself is the meeting with men who have been all about the world and had all kinds of experiences. Yesterday I dined with a man who knows all the islands in the Pacific, or nearly all. There was with us another man who knew the Andes, and another who had gone all across Siberia. If one could only meet these men at home! "But at home," as one of my newly made friends said, "we should be clerks in the City, or junior partners at best; we should live in a suburb, and never see anybody interesting at all." That is very true, and I am sure it is a splendid thing for a man to come abroad for awhile; yet not for too long, or his life will be spoiled. I saw the same man the other day looking at the cemetery. There were tears in his eyes. "I was thinking," he said, "of the poor beggars who die out here." "It is not the being buried in a cemetery in China, but the spending all your days out of England." That is the point. One may have to spend all one's days here. In our House, however, they have always recalled a man after good service, and provided for him at home. Claire, do you remember—but, of course, you *do*—how we used to go and look at the little graveyard, so deserted and forgotten, on the road to Abridge? Allen wrote a poem on it, and the old tombs, their epitaphs illegible, and the long forgotten dead. It is strange, but whenever I see the cemetery here I think of that far off lonely graveyard.

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'Nobody knows here what I mean when I say that I come from Hainault Forest. No one has ever heard of it. They think it is somewhere in Flanders, and the more learned among us connect me with Edward III. and the Black Prince and Froissart. It seems odd to belong to a place so little known. I have never yet come across anybody here who knows the East

End of London at all. When I tell them that Hainault Forest is at the East End they cry, "Oh, part of Whitechapel!" And I hear that my father, instead of being one of a body of most illustrious bankrupts, is supposed to be something small in the retail way in the Whitechapel Road.

'The people are pleasant. There are a great number of dinners and dances. I have learned to waltz; and there are some pleasant and lively girls to dance and to talk with. Oh, Claire, to think that we never waltzed together! We ought to have taught ourselves; you should have danced with Allen while I whistled a tune for you. We would have pushed the table in the corner to make room. A pretty couple you would have been. And then Allen should have whistled—no, he should have played on his lyre while you and I danced. I should like to have seen Apollo twanging away like anything while the Muses spun round. It was a most unfortunate omission in our otherwise careful education. I am not, you see, pining for home, though I should like, above and beyond all things, to live in England and to be near you again—if the old times could return, which they never quite do. Otherwise I am perfectly happy here. I have seen a great quantity of most interesting things; many more than ever I looked to see. I am living among a most remarkable people, whose ways are not our ways. I have learned the manners and customs of people who have not been brought up in a village of paupers. Besides dancing, I have learned to ride, to talk without arguing, to smoke cigarettes, and to play whist, which is an immense resource in itself. There are plenty of books and magazines—a great many more than I ever had access to before—to read. As for adventures, there are none as yet; as for work, it is as monotonous here as in England. I dreamed when I came out of doing something considerable in the way of a *coup*, in order to show them at home what a good man of business I am, but the routine is almost as unbroken as at home. I am like a knight who put on all his armour and went out in search of adventures and found none. I might as well have looked for them in the Chigwell Road.

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'I am looking, tell Allen, for his first production. Tell him he must not hurry it, but keep up his courage, even if he has to wait for recognition. I am sure that whatever he does will be well done and good work, and that he will become great, as he deserves. Do you remember how he used to spout poetry and go mad about Keats? It was a strangely wise thing of your father to send him about among the streets and people of London. What things he learned! I think of him when I go about in the native quarter here and watch the people. They are not in the least like the people among whom we used to walk and whom we used to study; yet they remind me of the East End, somehow. I suppose it is because their lot is so hard and there are so many of them, and they are so obscure. I am obscure myself;

but I feel myself possessed of a strong individuality, which these people cannot have, or else they would cease to be what they are. Among so many millions one is like an ant on an ant-hill. I have never forgotten the things we saw, nor your father's teaching. I have begun to understand what he meant; the history of the world is the history of mankind looking for a king; they have always desired to be taught. They have always wanted a Leader, and they never get one. Or perhaps they have already had the only Leader they are going to get, and they won't heed what he has said. I suppose I have got touched by what your father calls the sense of Humanity. He said that if any one once seized the idea of Humanity, he would never lose it again as long as he lived. I am always thinking of the things I have seen, and the way wrong could be set right. I do not see that way yet. Probably I never shall. But if I, who am not clever, was so affected, how much more Allen, with his power of expression and his noble heart? Perhaps he will, really, some day become a great Leader. Do you think he knows at all how much we think of him and hope from him? You must try to let him feel it. He wants encouragement and sympathy. But you always gave him both.

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'It seems to me that one reads a great deal more here than at home. Certainly at home one had not access to all the journals and magazines which one has here. It is astonishing to consider the immense variety of subjects which are every month discussed, and wonderful that we never saw any of their discussion. A good many of the papers, however, are only talk, and amount to nothing. Then I have been reading—all my letters are about myself—books on political economy. They don't, somehow, seem to have much to do with the people. Theories and humanity have yet to be reconciled; besides, the writers think only of markets. Some day there will be a new science of political and social economy, in which supply and demand will be cut out altogether, and be replaced by—something not at present known to the scientific.

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'And to think, Claire, that you are actually rich! It is like a beautiful dream. Your father will leave off teaching, which he never liked. What will he do now? Will he read a great deal, or will he spend all his time in the garden, or will he constantly invent and say wise things? Allen told me the great and good news, and I have been picturing to myself ever since the change it will make in your lives. As for you, it is delightful to think that you will no longer have to go backwards and forwards to school, and no longer spend your evenings over French exercises. You will be able to buy things now—music and books and everything. Will you leave the cottage? How stupid one is! As if you would not, wherever you go, carry the

cottage with you. When I come home I shall find you in a great house, perhaps; but the cottage will be there just the same. Because I cannot believe there will ever be any change in you or your father, except that he will become wiser every day, and that you will become every day—more and more the Claire of our faith. But, indeed, that you always were.

'Allen ought to be here, if only to see what men can be, if there are too many of them, and if there is no one to look after them. The swarming multitudes, their desperate fight for life, their hopelessness, the absence of religion, morals, knowledge, or ambition; the daily uncertainty of food would move Allen to burning words. As for the poorest English, they know that there is a better life possible. That seems the very first thing;—a glimpse of a possible better life. Sometimes I think that the Chinese are a type of the world of the future, when everything will have been tried, and tried in vain, and there will be a few rich—who *know*, and make themselves happy—and an immense number of poor who are kept at starvation point, because there is neither work, nor food, nor money to go round.'

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In this strain—for the extracts are taken from many letters—Will wrote. He forced himself to say no single word which Claire might not show her father or Allen; if he was allowed to write to her it was on the understanding that there was to be no love message sent across the seas; he was to talk as they always had talked, those three. Claire would like to hear about himself; he would like to write to her; he would not speak or think about his old friend as if he was a rival. And yet he would have liked to write between every line and between every word, 'my love—my dear—my love.' And yet always he remembered that after three years there was to be another question put and another answer received.

In these letters he returned again and again to the things which occupied his mind; not for him, as to Allen, did figures emerge from the crowd, and by their action and speech typify the condition of the poor. He saw only the crowds, a confused, inarticulate, badly grouped multitude; he would never be a poet for them; but he might yet do something for them. He was grown by this time a rather grave young man, who sometimes said things which struck the ear and irritated people accustomed to think in a groove; read a great deal; was keen and steady in business; led a simple and blameless life; was no recluse or ascetic, yet seemed to know nothing at all about society at home; who enjoyed all the amusements of the place, yet never got talked about, as happens to most, in connection with the name of any young lady; and who came from the East End of London, from some place—perhaps a part of Whitechapel—called the Forest of Hainault.

There is a thing concerning colonial life which is little com-

prehended. It is that ideas change slowly out there. The things which change ideas are the new discoveries, the new theories, the new men which are continually turning up at home. They are talked about in magazines, so that people abroad may read them, but that is not the same thing—the cold page does not give one the 'touch' of the time. We who stay at home are borne along, whether we like it or no, by the current; we change our thoughts, our faiths, our standpoint, with the change that goes on around us. What is wild Radicalism one day is mild Liberalism the next. But in the colonies it is not so. One takes out a stock of ideas and comes home again with them practically the same, and it is not till returning home again that one finds how great is the gulf which a few years have made.

Which things are an allegory, and mean that, while Will remained the same, Allen was changing. No one but Claire knew that the Allen who went to London burning for a poetic fame and full of the old boyish, simple enthusiasms, was changed already and would change more day by day, while Will remained unchanged. As for her father's dream concerning Allen, Claire had no kind of belief in it. Leaders of the people, she was certain, are made of sterner stuff.

CHAPTER IX.

A CUP OF TEA.

Allen waited for three days before he presented himself for that cup of tea. He found the ladies in their study—one of two small rooms which opened on each side of the hall. By daylight he saw what a curious little house it was—a little two-storied place, with a room on each side of the door, and, upstairs, a drawing-room built as a kind of annexe. The house stood back from the road, and there was a glass-covered passage. The walls within the two rooms and the hall and the staircase, and the bedrooms as well, if he had inquired into the fact, were covered with books. Gertrude lived always in a library. This afternoon she was sitting in a low, deep, leather chair, a reading-lamp on a small table beside her, and a book in her lap. The curtains were drawn though it was yet hardly twilight. Isabel was writing letters at a study table fitted with drawers. Two or three flowers were in a vase. There was a small pianoforte in the room, and no other furniture.

'Now you are come, Mr. Engledew,' said Gertrude with a kindly smile, 'we will have a cup of tea.'

She rang the bell, and they had that cup of tea, and talked of

things indifferent—how the house was once a small farm-house in the days when Westbourne Park was Westbourne Green, and St. Petersburg Place was Green Lane, and folk came out from London for curds and whey; and how Gertrude bought it cheap because it was haunted, but the dear tender-hearted ghost never once came near her, and so on. And presently she said, 'Isabel, my dear, play something while I talk to Mr. Engledew and ask his confidence. I know,' she added, 'that it is a very great thing to ask.'

'It is a very kind thing to ask it,' said Allen.

'Lawrence thinks very highly of you. Now, it is not as if Lawrence was an imaginative person. He is a hard man of science. He differs in that respect from the rest of his family, who all had imagination. He says you are clever. I like—oh, so very much!—to know young clever men. They are full of possibilities. One can dream all kinds of things about them. And, my dear, I have quantities of experience.'

Allen thanked her again. It was very pleasant to sit within this room and be called clever, and to have so kind a lady taking an interest in one, and Isabel was playing. Now at all times music produced a strange effect upon Allen. When he was angry and disappointed and despondent, the playing of Claire soothed and cheered him. That of Isabel seemed to stimulate him. It filled him with courage. When he came to know it better, it filled him with thoughts.

'When I wish to talk or to think seriously,' said Gertrude, 'Isabel plays to me. Good music brings restfulness—you young men must learn the need of rest—and it brings ideas. More, it seems to give one wisdom. George Eliot understood that so well. My dear, hear a great deal of music—hear it, if you can, every day. It is better, even, for the imagination than the noblest verse, because it gives wings to thought and sets the fancy free and opens the doors of the unreal world.'

While the elder lady spoke the girl played on, not mechanically, but with some strange, subtle sympathy, as if she were listening and setting music to the words of the speaker or the thoughts of the listener.

I fear that few would read—if I were to write it down—the homily which this veteran author pronounced for the instruction and warning of the young man before her.

She spoke of the beauty and glory of literature and of its responsibilities; and how a man should not dare to put forth hasty utterance or give anything to the world but his noblest and his best. This is old-fashioned stuff indeed. And she reminded him that a man's work should be full of confidence, cheerfulness, and laughter, with courage, invention, and hope, while a woman's, necessarily struck in a lower key, should be filled with consolation, sympathy, faith, and resignation. Then she became more old-fashioned still, and bade Allen remember

that every one who writes is a teacher, that he teaches best who knows most, and that there is a special kind of wisdom, very useful to the world at all times, possessed by the man who leads the better life.

Allen listened, sitting opposite to her, without a word. He was strangely moved. The music rippled like the soft murmur of a brook while this gentle preacher admonished him. When Miss Holt finished what she had to say, he bowed his head and kissed her hand, and she saw by the light of the fire that his eyes were humid.

Then she began to ask Allen about himself, and he presently found himself telling his whole story—how he had come to London ignorantly thinking that in his portfolio he carried fortune and fame; how he speedily became aware that his verses would certainly not bring him fortune because no one would buy them; nor fame because no one would publish them; how, after hawking them round among the publishers, he fell into a kind of despair and began to think that he must return home humbly, like a prodigal, and confess to his mother that he had sinned the sin of presumption, and that he was, indeed, fit for nothing but to be and to remain a clerk in the City, whither he would betake himself once more with saddened heart and gloomy prospects; how at this juncture he had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of her cousin Lawrence, who found out about his ambitions and cheered him and gave him good advice: and how, when his last sovereign was distinctly visible, there came to him literary employment of the humblest kind; and how, in spite of these discouragements, he kept on working every day at his verses, such as they were.

And all the time the music went on, and helped to draw his story from him.

'Oh,' said Gertrude, 'it is one more of the beautiful stories. There should be an allegory made—I will make it—of a princess, living in a splendid palace on a mountain, offering such rewards as pass understanding to such brave and generous souls who will win their way to her over deep ravines and up steep and dangerous rocks. Tell me more, Mr. Engledew.'

'I have no more to tell. I am still at the bottom of that hill. The rocks are so steep that I cannot even begin to climb. But yet,' he added softly, 'yet I dare to hope.'

'Will you bring me your verses and read them to me?'

Allen shook his head. He had already, he said, read his early verses to Claire, and the result was too wretched.

'Who is Claire?' asked Gertrude.

Isabel played her softest while Allen, blushing in the firelight, began to explain who was Claire. He told how there were three schoolboys living near a great forest, and one schoolgirl. How they all three were in love with that girl; how the girl's father, who was a French teacher, took two of the boys,

taught them first French—perfectly, so that they became as bilingual as any Russian—and then all kinds of things which they read with him in books ; and how he sent those two boys, when they grew older, to walk the streets of London and watch men and women and their ways ; and how he went with them to picture-galleries and theatres and museums, and taught them the meaning of art ; how, when one began timidly to write, the Frenchman gave him instruction in form and style ; and how, *enfin*, through this Frenchman and his daughter, the two boys were lifted above the level of their companions and became filled with thoughts and vague ambition.

'It is truly wonderful,' said Gertrude.

Then Allen told how the three boys, arrived at the age of twenty-one, proposed to Claire, all in the same day, and how they were bidden to wait for three years more.

'And the other boys?' asked Gertrude. 'Does Will, too, write poetry?'

'No, Will is practical. He has gone to China for his firm. He is the best fellow that ever lived,' said Allen, 'and the handsomest. Of course, I have not a chance beside Will.'

'Then he must, indeed, be a good fellow. And the third?'

Allen laughed.

'Olinthus—we always called him Tommy—is a partner in the City, and he does not care much about books. I don't think either Will or I am much afraid of his rivalry. But he will be much better off than either of us.'

'I think,' said Gertrude, 'that this is a most beautiful story. I am in love with your Frenchman and his daughter, who has such a pretty name. And she is sympathetic?'

'She is full of sympathy. I write to her—so does Will, because we must not take any advantage one over the other. And I tell her everything. I shall tell her of your kindness to me, if I may.'

'Of course you may, if you wish. My dear, I hope your verses are as good as your history. Then, indeed, you shall succeed. We looked for a poet, and we have found a lover as well. We women always take such an interest in a love story. And particularly we poor old women who have had no love story of our own.'

'Everybody loves you,' said Allen simply. Yet he blushed, as usual.

'When I was a girl I suppose I was always splashed with ink, which kept lovers off. Never mind, I have written lots of love stories, and heard lots told. I have had my full share of love that way. I am so much obliged to you, Mr. Engledew, for telling me yours. There was a most lovely and beautiful shepherdess, and three swains loved her, and she sent them away to make their fortunes. One went to Tom Tidler's ground

to try and pick up the gold; and one went to the Island of Sweet Fancies, where the brooks are running ink, and the meadows white parchment, and the reeds are quill pens; and one went to a far-off country. And the shepherdess sat down to wait.'

Allen laughed.

'We will not talk about it,' she went on, 'not even among ourselves.' She spoke as if they were already the oldest and most intimate friends. 'Do you think the boys will all love her for three years?'

'Of course they will,' said Allen. 'Why—who could help——'

He stopped, but Gertrude finished his sentence for him—'Help loving her? No one, my dear, I am sure. And now that I know all about you I shall take much more interest in your work.'

'My work! But you forget I have done no work.'

'You have your verses. Now, if you will not read them to me yourself, will you let Isabel read them to me? She reads very well. And patience; work your hardest. Don't forget to hear music; give your best'—Isabel played a louder, bolder piece—'your best and highest, and you will succeed. You will become one of our teachers; your words will sink into men's hearts. What better, my dear, can a man desire? What better has the world to give?' She gave him her hand again, and while he held it Isabel burst into a triumphal march.

'Happy boy!' said Gertrude. 'You have forty years of work before you. What cannot be done—in forty years?'

'We do not know, dear,' said Isabel thoughtfully, when Allen was gone, 'that he will get on. Are you not making him too confident?'

'My child, I do know, I cannot mistake the symptoms. But we shall see. It is a pretty story, this half-French girl. I hope she is a good girl and worthy of so much love. And of her three lovers, I wonder which she will take.'

'I suppose,' said Isabel, 'that there cannot be a doubt. If Mr. Engledew succeeds, she *must* take him. Who would hesitate between a mere City man and a poet?'

'My dear,' Gertrude replied, 'all girls would like a man of distinction; but when it comes to money—well, we shall see.'

In the school to which Isabel belonged, distinction was the only thing worth having. Most of their friends had distinguished themselves—more or less; all of them had tried to distinguish themselves. To be sure the number of men and women nowadays who do consider themselves distinguished is surprising.

'I like him very much, Gertrude,' Isabel went on. 'I like his eagerness and his mixture of modesty and confidence. I

think he is real. I wonder what she is like—this girl he loves.'

'My dear,' said Gertrude, 'a poet always loves beneath himself. No doubt a commonplace girl whom this poor boy has endowed, in imagination, with all the virtues. He will find out after he has married. Do you think Beatrice was faultless, or even Laura? And think of Prior and his Chloe, and Johnson and his old wife, and——'

'It is a pity,' said Isabel; 'we could have found him a mistress who would have appreciated his soul.'

Both ladies sighed. They would have enjoyed, above all things, the spiritual direction of such a soul in matters of love. And what a mess they would have made of it! It is a part of the curiousness that neither of them reflected that one of the two was young and pretty and with gifts of her own; and that love seemed to both a thing outside themselves.

Allen made haste to select from his verses those which he thought the best. He made them up into a packet and sent them off by post. He took them from the beautifully written copy which had gone the round of all the publishers, but they were still free from stain or soil or dog's ear, because nobody had taken the trouble to read them. On the next Thursday he expected that Gertrude would make some mention of them, but neither of the ladies said anything about them at all. On the Thursday following he went early, and was, in fact, among the first arrivals. And then he learned, to his great joy and confusion, that a surprise had been arranged for him. The evening was, in fact, to be consecrated, as the French say, to his poems. People were specially invited to hear some of them.

'We have read them all,' Gertrude whispered. 'I will not flatter you; some are very bad, and some are weak, and some are copies; but they have the true ring. You must never give up writing poetry, though you may write other things. Some day perhaps you will get your reward, and write a thing which shall never be forgotten. And now that I have your confidence and that we are friends, you must call me by my Christian name. All my life I have been called Gertrude by everybody whom I love. Courage, my dear; your verses are sure to please.'

The highest, noblest, purest, most complete, most satisfying, most enduring, and most intellectual joy attainable in this world is certainly to see your own piece on the stage, beautifully acted, beautifully mounted, compelling tears and laughter. Then you may look round and proudly say, with a tear of grateful joy, '*Ipse feci*.' But this is a joy that is vouchsafed to few. Some of us get goosed.

The next highest, noblest, purest, most satisfying, and most intellectual happiness is that derived from hearing your own

poems read or recited with feeling and truth of expression. This also happens to few of us, most people selfishly preferring to read and recite their own poems.

But this joy was actually experienced by Allen. The two ladies had invited for the reading all those of their friends most likely to appreciate the reading, together with those who would be likely to talk about it. For to raise public opinion about a new poet is to give him a kind of fame in advance.

They made choice of three pieces which Isabel undertook to recite. This young lady had developed none of the literary gifts which belonged to nearly all her people ; she wrote nothing at all, but to make up, she was gifted, as has been already stated, with a natural talent for acting. Her face was capable of almost any expression ; she could assume a character and look like it ; her voice was full, her figure was good. And, above all, she was not afraid. None of the people among whom she had been brought up were ever afraid ; they were ready at all times, and before any audience, to act, to recite, to sing, to speak, to write, to paint—anything that they could do. There is, in fact, growing up among us, a class who belong to the public as much as do professional actors, jugglers, circus people, and saltimbanques. With them the question is not if anything is to be attempted, but what is being done.

The first of the three pieces was a quiet poem, a musing in the Forest, inspired by Wordsworth—the communing of the soul with herself. Somebody played a prelude, and Isabel stood up with folded hands and fixed eyes, rapt in meditation. She stood before them all silent for a moment. Then, slowly, calmly, she spoke the first lines. As she spoke them, as she went on with them, Allen's heart fell within him. They were his lines ; but the thought, the soul of them seemed put into them, not by him at all, but by the girl who spoke them. Yet she altered in them nothing. There was a little murmur of applause when she finished, but few of the faces among the rows of listeners lit up with any response. So far he had failed, and he felt it. Then the musician played again. Isabel stood up, and told this time a little love story. It was the merest thread and indication of a story. She filled it up and put life into it by her eyes, her voice, her features. This time the people applauded in earnest, and all their faces were lit up. Love, you see, is a common emotion, but meditation attracts comparatively few. Once more the music played, and then Isabel stood up to declaim the third piece. Allen knew it to be the strongest and best among the manuscripts. Whatever the faults of the composition the situation was strong and tragic. It was so strong that it held the audience from the beginning. And when it was finished, Gertrude, beside whom Allen had been standing, pressed his hand, saying aloud, 'We all thank you ;' and Isabel brought him the manuscript and gave it him, with

the thanks of the congregation; and all the people shouted, that is to say, they murmured, 'Oh! ah! yes!' and 'Indeed!' And one old lady who was stone deaf and had been brought by mistake, laughed long and loud, and said it was capital indeed, and that the last lines were quite irresistibly funny; and then all the rest laughed too, and Allen wished that old lady at the bottom of the Red Sea. But it was a great and triumphant success, and it was not until the next morning that Allen remembered that the applause of a drawing-room is not exactly the same thing as the acceptance of a publisher.

There was more playing and singing after this, but this part of the entertainment seemed flat to Allen after the music of his own words. He found an opportunity of thanking Isabel for the beautiful way in which she recited his verses.

'Do you wish,' she asked, 'that Claire had been here?'

Then he was introduced to some of the people, and they paid him compliments; and one man begged to introduce himself, and said that he was the editor of a magazine, and that he should very much like to see a copy of the third piece which had been recited, because he thought that if Allen would give his consent, he could see his way to using it.

This seemed a delightful and practical outcome of the evening, and Allen very readily and even joyfully hastened to give the required consent, and promised to send a copy of the verses the very next day. Something would, no doubt, have come of this invitation but for an unlucky accident. The editor was a very, very busy man; he edited a magazine, wrote novels, read for a publisher, played whist for three hours every day, insisted on going to bed at ten, and sometimes, though he would rather have stayed at home, went out to dinner. When he heard the verses read he rubbed his hands and nodded his head, because he thought he had caught a New Man, which is a rare fish after which all editors are continually hunting and fishing and asking for; first, because the New Man, if he is unlike all previous New Men, runs up a magazine; and next, because a New Man, although he is so rare a fish and so valuable, is, oddly enough, the cheapest fish in the market. There are several kinds of New Men, and one kind is not always so valuable as another. For example, a new poet is not so good as a new novelist; but he is something.

Now when the editor who made this proposal received the verses, which was the very next morning, he began by running his eye hastily over them, and he saw that they would do. He then laid them on the table before him and went on with a manuscript novel which he had to read. The novel was offered to the magazine by a young lady; she stated in a very pathetic letter which accompanied it, that she had never tried a novel before—indeed, the reader very soon discovered that she was entirely ignorant of construction, character, or plot. But she

was, she said, with her family, in the deepest distress for want of money, and she thought to make a little, as a good many other people do, by writing a story. Therefore she sat down and wrote away as hard as ever she could pelt, thinking that anybody could write a story, and when it was finished she sent it, with the heart-rending letter already mentioned, in hopes that it would stave off ruin. The editor had the softest of hearts, but the manuscript was dreadful, dreadful rubbish, and he was bound to return it. And so grieved was he at the badness of the girl's story and the misery of her letter, that he quite forgot all about Allen's verses, and rolled them up with the manuscript story, which went back to the young lady. But an execution was already in the house, and she tore up and burned the whole thing in despair, Allen's verses and all. And what became of her I do not exactly know, but I think that the execution was stopped somehow, and that her lover came to her assistance and things were squared. Then she was married, and now she thinks no more about the manuscript novel, being continually occupied with the baby.

Meanwhile Allen went home after that recitation of his poems, with his heart aglow. Yes, they were beautiful. *Could* he have meant to say all that Isabel put into them? If so—— but if not, then this girl was a greater than he. Allen did not consider that one art inspires another, so that the actor may teach the poet unconsciously things which he knew not were in his verse, and the poet may all unknowingly teach the actor things of which he had never dreamed. But Isabel! The memory of the girl's attitude remained with him; he heard her voice still; he saw her eyes, rapt, inspired, like the eyes of a Muse; for the first time in his life he was completely contented with himself. With this glow of satisfaction was mingled the image of the girl. 'What will you do with him, Gertrude?' asked Lawrence.

'I know what I will do with him,' she replied.

'I am afraid he will never make a journalist,' he said; 'he is too sensitive, and knows absolutely nothing of affairs. Else one might run him for a leader writer. But journalists must be made of sterner stuff.'

'Journalist! nonsense, Lawrence. His work will be of a far higher kind. The journalist is the scene-painter of literature. Allen's way is so plain before him that nothing can be plainer. He will write something or other, it matters nothing what, to begin with. Then he will write tales; then he will write a three-volume novel; then he will write a play; and then he shall publish his poems, but not till then.'

'You have planned all for him, already.'

The ready tear ran to her eyes.

'Lawrence,' she said, 'the boy has the most sincere soul I have ever met. Not calm, not self-seliant, not strong, not always wise,

I should say, but receptive ; full of generous thoughts and burning ideas. What can such a man become except a novelist and a poet ? To make him a journalist would be like taking a razor to cut bread-and-butter. Happy young man ! The noblest career in the world lies open to him. And it is given to me to help him.'

And in the distant village there sat a philosopher with white hair who said, 'The despair which follows neglect will fall upon him. Then he will remember his old dreams'—he forgot that they were not Allen's dreams, but his own—'and he will return to them. The poetry he has written will give him command of language ; he will then cease to be a poet, he will become an orator. By help of the knowledge which I have taught him, he will have learned things to tell the people which the people of no country have ever heard before.'

CHAPTER X.

A SECOND STEP.

In the spring of that year, being still the first year of the probation, Allen took his next step. This was not a very important step, but it was a distinct step in advance.

Everybody knows that men who labour are divided into those who do as much as they can for the money—a small minority, these are—and those who do as little as they possibly can, so as just not to get out-kicked. This division is very important, because all the prizes are unfairly given to the men of the first division. Surely medals, crosses, titles, pensions, honours, ought to be open to all, and at least a C. B.-ship for a lifetime of perseverance in doing nothing ought to be within the ambition of the laziest. Just as mathematicians take a simple case first as a test for a theory, so we may illustrate the position for the instruction of economists by a single example.

If you walk along the roads belonging to the parish of Paddington, you will observe among the Roaders—that dignified and useful body who sweep the roads for the omnibus horses—the greatest difference in zeal. Some are careless and slothful in their sweeping ; some handle the broom as if they were ashamed of it ; some as if they disliked it ; some as if they were born to better things, and had once stood behind counters. Some, again, are for ever stopping to exchange ideas ; some shed tears at sight of a public-house ; and some love to meditate awhile, leaning on the broom. Among them is a man, small of stature—in fact he is only three feet two or thereabouts, and his legs are curly—but he has a great and

determined head, and he carries the longest broom of any. This man is the Prince of Roaders. For eighteen-pence a day he throws the whole strength, heart and soul of him into sweeping: he sweeps with zeal, he sweeps continually, he sweeps with conscience and feeling. The work is full of responsibility for him, he magnifies his office; the eye of the policeman is upon him, he is an example to his fellows; he loveth not the narrow streets where he feels that he is losing time; he longs to be back to the breadth and generous depth of the mud in the Edgware Road; on Sundays he saunters on the pavement between services and joyously thinks of the morrow.

I have been led to think of this great man while considering the labours of Allen upon his despised Organ.

Being told that he was to provide, somehow, an attractive paper every week, he set to work with great zeal and produced a sheet which ought to have amazed and edified every person connected with leather from the Master and Warden and Clerk of the Leather Sellers' Company to the 'translators' of Seven Dials. He cut out stories from American papers, he also found very good verses in the same rich mines; and from the stores of English literature he cut and copied all kinds of interesting paragraphs. Finally, he began to put in things of his own, little *études*, essays, and sketches. Nobody, really, ought to be allowed to write essays before he is sixty. The best I know, also the shortest, are those pithy ones compiled by King Solomon when about that age.

Allen found, after a time, that he had one critic and one admirer. There was an old greybeard in the office, a foreman; the Organ was in his department; from the first he read it critically. In the earliest number he recognised a master-hand. He looked to see a falling off in the second, the third, and the fourth numbers. On the contrary, there was improvement. This foreman had experience of Organs, he knew that as a rule they are badly edited; but this young gentleman was a conscientious young gentleman; he spent long hours in his office; he used the scissors with discrimination and the paste with judgment; he 'made up' with an artistic eye; he did not pitchfork things into the paper; he did not consider that anything would do for the subscribers; he even seemed — but this might be fancy — to have a feeling for leather. Other gentlemen connected with the press, again, sometimes came to their work in the morning with a little thickness in speech, and fell asleep in the afternoon. This young man not only was always sober, but never wanted to drink anything. And, when these original articles began the old man's admiration became irrepressible. He must needs speak if only to show his own taste and appreciation of style.

'Young gentleman,' he said, 'your tales' — alluding to the paste and scissors department — 'are Shakesperian, quite Shakes-

perian. It is a marvel to all the world'—he spoke as if the Organ was thus largely disseminated—'where you find them and how you keep it up. As for the poetry'—which also belonged to the same department—'I dessay to them who likes verses that it is pleasing. But what charms me, Mr. Engledew, is your own articles. There isn't an Organ in all London which gets such writing. But we shall lose you, that's where the shoe pinches. It isn't two quid a week that will keep a young gentleman of your powers.'

Praise, even from a foreman, is pleasing to a young writer.

'On the magazines, Mr. Engledew,' the old man went on, 'they pay, I believe, a pound a page. It would be nothing to you to dash off twenty pages a day. There is a hundred and twenty pounds a week. Think of that!'

Stimulated by this encouragement, Allen consulted Lawrence Ouvry about attacking the magazines a second time.

They held a solemn council or Parliament upon the subject.

'I've expected you a long time,' said Lawrence. 'Now let us talk. As for journalism, Gertrude won't hear of it. And I think it would be a mistake. They want harder men. You would only become a prig, and belittle your subjects and yourself. Let us consider. As for this little paper'—it was a short paper on a French poet—'it strikes me that it is pretty good. Let me cut it out. Whatever you are writing,' he went on meditatively, 'you must consider your editor. One editor only cares for politics; another, only for burning questions; another, for practical things; another, for art; and another for literature.' He proceeded to tick off the magazines one after the other, and to give the character of each important editor. 'As for verses, none of them want verses; most of them hate verses, to begin with; one man funks them, sends them round among his friends for advice, and goes by the weight of opinion. Most likely, if you were to go with a string of sonnets as good as Petrarch's, they would all be returned to you, unless you had made your name as a poet first.'

'Well,' Allen sighed—would his verses never get a chance? 'What about an essay?'

'Humph!' The wise young man shook his suggestive head.

'You see it is almost as easy to write a bad essay as a bad poem, and, worse still, all the editors know when an essay is bad. Can't you strike upon something novel?'

'You *shall* tell me,' said Allen, 'how it is that you are so learned in all the secrets of literature.'

Lawrence laughed.

'Did I not tell you that my father was an editor, and my mother a poet, and that one of my sisters writes three-volume novels, and that I wish she wouldn't? and that Gertrude Holt is my cousin; and that all my relations go about with inky fingers?'

'All that does not account for what you know. How did you learn the names of all the editors and their characteristics, and what the magazines circulate, and what they pay, and all about it?'

'I hear it partly at the club, and partly——hush!'

He rose, and with an air of the greatest mystery closed the outer oak.

'Tell me,' he whispered, 'what my people have told you about me.'

'They say that you have taken a line different from that of the rest; you are a man of science; a cold mathematician.'

'It is the traditional belief,' said Lawrence gloomily. 'I was told at the beginning that, as everybody else in my family went in for literature, and it was becoming monotonous, I had better take up something else. They shoved me out. I wasn't allowed to be a rival to the rest of the family.'

'Well?'

'They sent me to Cambridge, and told me to read mathematics. Then they sat down and went on with their verses and their stories. I had no great objection, because the science of mathematics, if you happen to like it, is a pleasing pursuit, up to a certain point. After that it becomes tedious. I even took honours, and they made me a Fellow. I am now, in addition, a barrister. But I know no law, and I have no practice, and I do no mathematics. And, in point of fact, though no one knows anything about it, I am a humbug. I have gone back to the family profession. I—in point of fact—I write.'

This young man was long past blushing, but there was a certain pleasing confusion in his mind when he made this confession.

'What do you write?' asked Allen eagerly. 'I am so glad. Now I understand your sympathy with me. Tell me what you write.'

'I write frivolities. They are sometimes comediettas in one act, which people will call stories; sometimes they are *vers de société*; sometimes they are *ballades* on a blue mug or a milk-jug, you know; sometimes they are articles of the kind called light—in fact, I am one of the frothiest and most frivolous of writers; my cousin Isabel is fond of my productions, and reads them, and never even suspects——'

'That is because you look so wise.'

'So did Lord Thurlow. Nature ought to pay some regard to the fitness of things. But it's rather disappointing when you have done rather a smart thing to find that nobody thinks you capable of doing it.'

'But why not tell them?'

'Picture to yourself Gertrude's sorrow and Isabel's disgust. I am not even a serious writer. As for you, you will be as

serious as a sexton, unless you take care. They will have to give up their cold and critical man of science, too. No, Engledew, do not ask me to tell Isabel—yet.'

'I understand,' said Allen. And then he was seized with one of those fits of uncontrollable laughter which only come to the young. So had he laughed at thinking of Tommy's countenance at the famous supper.

'The new departure of the family greatness!' said Lawrence. 'That will have to go, too. Dreadful! How shall I tell them?'

'But why not?'

Lawrence shook his head.

'You don't know——Well—about yourself now. When first I made your acquaintance, in a happy hour, I thought you were the most ignorant young man ever raised. When I got to know you better, and found out what your ambitions were, and guessed your powers, I was in rather a fix. Because, you see, I wanted to help you, and I could help you—that is to say, I could take anything to an editor and ask him to consider it. But you were so raw that I thought it best to let you learn a little experience. It wouldn't hurt you to have your verses sent back, and to find things out for yourself. So I left you alone. You have been learning all this time a quantity of most valuable things.'

'I begin to see,' said Allen. 'Yes; I must have seemed extraordinarily raw.'

'After six months of Gertrude and her *salon*, and your own observations and the experience of that most blessed of all Organs, you ought to write ten times as well. And, of course, you can. Remains, however, to find out a promising line.'

He then went on to point out that, in writing for a magazine, the safest and best method is to begin with a subject about which people are perfectly ignorant, and which is at the same time attractive. Great names, he explained, have been made by going to fundamental things, such as the questions, whether it is not better never to have been born; whether it is right to honour your parents; whether religion is worth having; whether the fittest rulers of a country are not the most ignorant classes in that country, and so forth. Also reputations have been made by writing in affected and uncouth language—of course only very superior persons can use jargon. Could not, however, some subject be found which was a little out of the way and yet attractive? Next to getting a good subject, he explained that it is highly important that every paper should be signed; people soon get accustomed to a new name. By degrees a *clientèle* is established, and a man's things are looked for. At last he is in a position to ask admission into any journal, magazine, or review that he pleases.

All this seemed sound advice.

'I am glad you think so,' said Lawrence. 'Now for a subject. Do you know languages?'

'I know French and German.'

'Why,' cried Lawrence, 'we are both fools together. Here,' he pointed to the articles in the Organ, 'is an endless mine of subjects. Go, find a picturesque French poet—they are all picturesque except Boileau—and dress him up and translate him, and the thing is done. I charge myself with the rest.'

Allen found such a poet and worked upon him. He translated some of his poems with great care; then he constructed a portrait of him, so that he became, to all who read, a living man. He worked at it assiduously; he grudged no time upon his paper. At last he brought it to his friend—finished.

Lawrence tossed it carelessly on his table, and began cruelly to talk about something else. Why, Allen wanted him to read the paper and discuss the subject.

Oh! happy day which brought the young writer the first proofs of his first accepted paper.

It is a solemn moment. I know none more solemn—when one gets his first proofs. The young man—of course I do not mean the young man who has been brought up among proofs, and whose family all belong to the profession, like Lawrence, but the young man from the country—feels a choking at the throat and a beating of the heart; he is ashamed of himself. I do not know why, but he is; he feels sure the work will turn out badly; he has been a fool, he thinks, to believe that he can write. Then he falls to work nervously and eagerly. He reads his proof first critically to see if the sentences are balanced; then he reads it coldly, as if he were a reader for the press, and only cared for the right spelling, the proper stops, or the wrong founts; then he reads it a third time, and begins to alter adjectives, displace adverbs, and change semicolons into colons—printers are all in a conspiracy to abolish the old-fashioned stop called the colon—to put capital letters where they ought to be—printers are also leagued together to abolish capital letters. Next he reads it a fourth time in order to put *then* for *thus*, *thus* for *then*; *then* for *there*, and *there* for *then*; *these* for *those*, and *those* for *these*, with other such corrections of errors which the printers make out of pure gaiety and for the fun and joke of it. Then he reads it suspiciously, because, perhaps, some date is wrong, or there is some small error of fact. Lastly, with infinite pains, he writes up the proof a little here and there. At last, reluctantly, he lets it go, but asks for a revise; when the revise comes he makes more corrections and asks for another.

The next number of the magazine appeared, but without Allen's paper! This was a dreadful disappointment. Four weary weeks passed, and then—ah! then—his paper appeared.

He had made his appearance in public at last. He sent one copy to Claire, and another to his mother, and another to Gertrude; and when, next day, he went to Bayswater for afternoon tea, Isabel was reading his article aloud, and Gertrude greeted him with appreciative praise.

'My dear,' she said, taking his hand, 'you will work in other lines and do more original work. But this is good work. The translations are admirable, and your study of the poet is life-like. As a first step it is all that is to be wished.'

'Thank you, Gertrude. And you, Isabel?' For all writers—even the hardened, review-battered old writers—are insatiate of praise. It makes them write better. 'Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood.' 'And you, Isabel?'

'It is truly delightful, Allen. What does Claire think of it?'

'Claire has not written yet.' Perhaps he thought Claire might have written by return post.

And then they talked over the article, discussing it from every point of view, until Allen almost believed that it was a matter of national importance. So that it was with a thrill of indignation that he read in a weekly paper the following abominable notice: 'The two serial novels in —— maintain their interest. The current number also contains the usual allowance of essays and biographical papers, pretty well up to the general standard of this popular magazine.' 'Pretty well up to the general standard!' He was greatly dejected to think that his paper could only be considered as 'pretty well' up to the general standard. And then, on looking through the paper again, he discovered—a thing which disheartened and disgusted him—that he had passed over three most glaring errors—viz., two semicolons which ought to have been colons, and a *thus* for a *then*. Horrible carelessness! Would the editor find it out?

CHAPTER XI.

A DAZZLING SUCCESS.

THERE lies, not far from Capel Court, a mysterious world, the world of Finance. It is a world inhabited by a race resembling men, who spend their lives in whispering, chattering in corners, winking at each other, making signs, buying nothing at all without money, and making great profit thereat; selling for nothing what they have not got and going bankrupt over the transaction; building up great edifices for other people out of rotten eggs; knocking these down again and with the profits buying marble palaces; stealing the slender fortunes of widows, orphans, clergymen, and all who are poor and defenceless;

promising what they will never perform, stating what they know to be false, and prophesying things which will never happen. Their language among themselves is a jargon said impossible to understand. Outside, however, they can talk English. Now among this world it presently began to be whispered that there had arisen an operator of extraordinary sagacity and boldness.

The first step in the direction of greatness is to attract attention; the next is to become the subject of conversation; the third to have stories, mostly false, told about you; after this, if you keep it up, you become the object of everybody's envy and hatred. This is true greatness, at which we should all aim.

Olinthus Gallaway advanced quickly from the first to the second step. He got talked about; his transactions were magnified and his successes exaggerated, and his origin and first beginnings were put back, so to speak, in order to bring his sudden rise into better relief—he was reported, for instance, to have been an errand boy to begin with; and everybody asked how and by what methods he had acquired the greater natural insight with which he began to be credited.

'As he has gone up,' said his uncle, that steady old man of business, who did not believe in sudden success, 'as he has gone up, so he will come down—a rocket, sir.'

Young men in the City, however, admire rockets. The rocket not only goes up very high, but it is a most splendid and beautiful thing, leaving a bright track behind it, and when it bursts it scatters about showers of golden rain. True it then comes down, an obscure and useless stick with an empty case tied on to it. But, among financial rockets, there has been found out a way of coming down soft.

Olinthus, for his own part, found his greatness a thing eminently enjoyable. There were drawbacks—most serious drawbacks to be sure: the man who gave him his daily orders was a horribly irritable and peevish old man: his tongue was as sharp as a knife; he was overbearing, harsh, exacting, and insisted on his orders being carried out to the letter. He frequently informed his partner that he was far more stupid than could have been believed possible, even in fallen humanity. If he found, as often happened, some difficulty in getting his plans understood, he would apply without stint or moderation the stimulus of the strongest and most abusive language. If he had been a younger man I believe he would have stimulated and encouraged his partner's somewhat sluggish intellect by the exhibition of Father Stick, that eminent persuader. It was hard, indeed, for the young man to bear these things; but he reflected that the walls were thick, and that no one knew or suspected. And then, he had the opportunity almost every day of observing how obedience led to golden results, even though

three-fourths, which was shameful, went to the man who wanted the money least. As for the false position which he occupied, that gave him no shame at all. When—outside the office—he was congratulated and flattered for his extraordinary acumen, he only smoothed his chin, smiled, and looked as wise as Nature would allow. Sometimes it certainly did occur to him that if his partner should happen to fall ill, or die, or should take it into his head to retire from the firm, or should turn him out and carry on the business openly, it might be awkward for him; because in that case he would have to abandon the business of speculation altogether, and if his little pile was not already made it might be very disagreeable for him. On the other hand, if the old man should only go on for another year or two, he would make that little pile, and a very comfortable little pile it would be. At first, he used to wonder what were the secret sources of information possessed by his wonderful partner; but as he never found out anything nor advanced one single step towards understanding the business in which he was supposed outside to be so great a proficient, he ceased to trouble his mind about it and endeavoured only to perform his own part as executive partner so as to keep Mr. Colliber in good temper and prevent his thinking of a retirement or a change in partners. For oh! how the men he knew, the young City men, would jump at such a chance! Who would not endure, provided it was kept secret, the contumely and ill-treatment of such a ghost, such a substantial ghost, who was building up for him such a fortune, and bestowing upon him so great a reputation? Why seek for reason? He was ordered, blindly and without asking questions, to buy with the right hand, and with the left hand to sell, the same stock at the same time; he was to bull or to bear, or both—why? The thing was inexplicable. The result was without any doubt: if he continued a mere machine; if the 'executive partner' was only a puppet, whose strings were pulled by a man in a back office, and whose limbs were worked without his knowing why; and a mouthpiece speaking words which he did not understand, what mattered it provided the money kept rolling up?

The orders which Mr. Colliber gave him extended even to the details of his private life. Above all, he was to practise diligently the art of silence.

'You will not say a word, or drop a hint,' said Colliber, 'not the least hint of what you have done or are doing. As for what you are going to do,' he sneered, showing his teeth in a most disagreeable manner, 'you can't drop a hint, because you don't know. Do you hear me? Not a word must be said about my operations. If you talk, I shall find out; and then—you know what.'

'I am perfectly secret, sir,' said Olinthus trembling. 'I hope you can at least trust that I——'

'They'll get round you,' interrupted the senior partner. 'The women will try to get round you. You will be asked to dinner; they will give you dry champagne and put flowers on the table and tell you that you are the wisest of men. I know their tricks and their trumperies. They used to try it on with me. They will say, "Hush!" when you are going to speak, and look at you across the table and make great eyes at you. I know 'em—I know their tricks and trumperies. After dinner they will make you sit beside them and then more great eyes, till your silly brain will reel; very likely they will say that you are as handsome as you are clever.' Olinthus blushed, because there indeed was struck a weak spot. He certainly thought he was remarkable for being at once so handsome and so clever. 'Yes; they'll say anything to get round you'—Mr. Colliber really could put things in the most disagreeable way—'and then they'll ask in a whisper what they should buy. They will say that so great a financier can afford to be generous. And your knees will knock together; but still you—mustn't—tell them. Do you understand that? Your partnership depends upon your silence.'

'Yes,' said Olinthus, 'oh yes, I quite understand.'

'You have got to be adamant. Do you hear?'

'Certainly, sir; certainly, adamant.'

'You can't look wise if you try ever so hard,' his pleasant partner went on, 'but you might look knowing perhaps. Endeavour to look knowing when they pump you; shut up tight: say nothing: when they sniggle up and make eyes, look the other way; when they talk about the great financier, change the subject; say you have left the City behind. That's an easy thing to say. You can get out of it that way, even though they leave off asking you to dinner. And, besides, you can do that without letting one find out what a stupendous ass you are.'

'Yes, sir,' said Olinthus, without betraying the least resentment at this arbitrary treatment. 'At the same time, sir, I would observe that my friends, when they ask me to dinner, do so for the pleasure of my——'

'If I only had caught young Massey in time, he would have been of real use. I could have taught him, while—as for you—if it wasn't that I wanted a dummy—well!'

And this was only one of many disagreeable conversations conducted in this tone.

The junior partner retired, and drove home in his nice cab to his new chambers. They were beautiful chambers in Piccadilly, furnished with less splendour, it is true, than their owner could have desired; but then they were furnished in the fashion, and the bill was really stupendous.

On the table there lay a note addressed in a lady's hand-writing. Olinthus tore it open and read it with a smile of satisfaction.

'I'm an ass and a fool, am I?' he said, after reading the note twice over. 'Yet a Countess asks me to dinner—the young and beautiful widow of an Earl asks such an ass and such a fool to dinner. She doesn't operate, she doesn't want information. She has never asked me to recommend a buyer to a safe thing. Why does she ask me, then?' He looked in the glass and smiled again. 'Claire,' he said, 'is a very pretty girl and all that. But a young Countess! and a widow!' he looked in the glass again.

The cause of Mr. Colliber's contempt and wrath was the difficulty he found in coaching his partner for a certain difficult and delicate piece of business which he was just then working up. It was a big thing, a very big thing, and it required to be carried through with great delicacy and coolness; in fact, it was of such great importance that Mr. Colliber made his partner rehearse two scenes at least in his presence, and to rehearse them till he was word-perfect, and had been taught the by-play. And yet he knew nothing at all of what was meant.

The business was this. There was once a young Englishman who had a few thousands—a very few. He had also a great aversion to the confinement of an office, and a great love of riding, shooting, fishing, and so forth. There are many such young Englishmen. This young man tried many things; but as everything begins with an exam., and as he was always plucked, he could find no opening for himself at home; therefore he turned his eyes upon the colonies, which seem to exist especially to meet such cases as his. After consideration, he thought that coffee-planting in Sindbad's Island – named after the discoverer—would afford him a reasonable amount of open air, riding, shooting, fishing, cards, brandy and soda, and cigarettes, combined with business, and he laid out his capital in the purchase of a small coffee estate in that colony, and went out there and began to operate.

Now the planting of coffee is not what it used to be in this colony. For the soil, which was once rich, is now poor and only kept going with guano, and hurricanes are more frequent than they were, and the cost of labour has gone up on the one hand, while the price of coffee has gone down on the other. Therefore this young man, who began by paying three times as much for his estate as it was worth, sorrowfully beheld his good money going after his bad, and his liabilities increase while his crops grew worse. He therefore began to contemplate the possibilities of bankruptcy, and to realise that unless a miracle happened even brandy and soda would become an unattainable article.

Then a miracle did happen. Gold was found in that island —that is to say, gold had always been known to exist, but a speculative and ingenious man turned up who maintained that gold was plentiful enough to be worked for profit.

Delightful! His own estate lay in the auriferous region.

He made great haste, filled a sack with ore dug out of his fields, packed in it all the bits which looked most like containing gold, and took his passage home, carrying the precious sack with him. He was not a remarkably clever young man, but he was prudent enough to see that here was a chance—his one chance—such a chance as would never occur again—of selling his estate. And in some way or other—how did he always find out these things?—Mr. Colliber found out before this young man landed in England what was his errand and what he hoped to do.

It was the coffee-planter with the sack of ore and the estate in the rich auriferous region whom the executive partner was ordered to receive.

The planter kept his appointment, having in his hand a small bag full of stuff which looked like nuggets gone brown. He expected to find a sharp man of business in a dingy office. He found a large, light, and handsomely-furnished room, and a young man, younger than himself, looking the reverse of sharp, with fat cheeks and rather fishy eyes. Never did the appearance of a man so belie his reputation. Yet he had heard such splendid accounts of Mr. Gallaway's ability if once he could be persuaded to take up a thing.

'Now, sir,' said the great financier, with some approach to sharpness, 'let us talk business.' He took out his watch and looked at it—this was part of the by-play. 'Take that chair. I have got just ten minutes for you. You have an estate to sell, I understand—a coffee estate, in which you have lost money.'

'I have—in Sindbad Island.'

'Just so; and luckily for you it is supposed to lie in the auriferous district.'

'It is in the very heart of the rich auriferous district. The ore has been analyzed, and is said to contain——'

'Just so. What will you take for it?'

'I will take,' said the planter, looking his man straight in the face, 'I will take twenty thousand pounds for it.'

He expected to be invited to go away at once, or at least to reconsider his proposal. Quite the contrary, Mr. Gallaway laughed pleasantly.

'Twenty thousand! If I take up the business, we can do better than that for you. Supposing, for instance, that I get you a purchaser for fifty thousand, would you object to my taking fifteen for myself?'

'Of course,' said the vendor, puzzled. 'But—but—then—why don't you buy it yourself, and sell it for what you can get? I offered it to you for twenty thousand.'

'You did. But I do not buy estates,' said Mr. Gallaway. 'That is not my business. Come. Shall I repeat what I said? or do you agree? If I get a purchaser for fifty, you will give me fifteen?'

'Certainly; I agree. It will still be fifteen thousand more than I expected.'

'Considering that the estate only cost you six thousand, you will have done very well. Then that will do. You will hear from me to-morrow. Good morning. I have another appointment immediately.'

This was the first scene of the drama. Mr. Colliber was pleased to approve of his conduct of the affair, so far. Olinthus was next instructed to visit a certain firm with whom he had already had transactions. To this firm, after certain preliminaries, all of them carefully studied beforehand, he offered the estate for £50,000.

'You shall buy this estate,' he said. 'You will leave it to me to get a purchaser for you. If I get you £150,000 for it, you will give me as commission £30,000 for myself. That is business.'

The firm bought that estate; the firm sold it the following week to the Sindbad Island Gold Mining Company (Limited), capital, £200,000, in 200,000 £1 shares. And how the great Mr. Gallaway—never so great as when he was operating with a newly-formed company—manipulated the shares and ran them up, and how much this firm made out of that one transaction alone would require a volume in itself to relate. But it was terrible to Olinthus, in the glory which followed the *coup*, to remember that seventy-five per cent. went to the other man.

This was the first great *coup*. I am happy to relate that Olinthus, who was a good son, bought his mother's house for her out of the proceeds, gave her a thousand pounds, and to each of his three sisters a thousand pounds, so that they all became heiresses on the spot, and shortly afterwards married men in a Steady Way. This was kind of him. He was also extremely benevolent to himself at this period, and never allowed himself to desire anything which he did not immediately buy. Think of buying all you want! The work of promoting companies and dealing with their shares is even more delicate and unintelligible than speculating in stock, but Olinthus found that it was much more lucrative. The British public is never tired of companies; sometimes there is a lull, but only for a short time, and then the game goes on again with undiminished vigour. Mr. Gallaway for his part was instrumental in floating a great many, although people now say that he never promoted a single sound concern. There was the great South American Silver Mine, called the Doña Mercedes. It lies in the Andes and was formerly worked by the Incas of Peru, who abandoned it when they thought they had come to the hard pan; it became a gold mine to Mr. Olinthus Gallaway. Then there was the North Australian Copper Mine; it is the richest copper mine in the world; it is full of copper, bristling with copper. You can pick up enough copper off the ground to make an

antique coal-scuttle; but there is no fuel, and there are no roads, and there is no labour. To Mr. Gallaway that copper mine was also a gold mine. Then there was the Arctic Steam Navigation Company, which bought up a most beautiful fleet of steamers, out of which the owners had already made immense fortunes. In fact they only parted with their steamers because they were grown old and worn out, and generously asked no more for them than they had cost when new, and only received for themselves the posts of managing directors with a percentage on freight in the gross—yet people call Olinthus hard names in connection with this line of steamers. Then there was the company for purchasing and carrying on a most noble business out of which three generations of partners had made fortunes; the present partners only consented to form the house into a company when it had begun to fall into a rapid decline, for which there was no cure and failure was imminent. They nobly took, when they went out of it, not a penny more than the value of the business when it had been at its best. There was also the railway across the Romney marsh connecting Lydd with Romney, Hythe, and Rye. There was also the Company for developing the trade of the Norfolk Broads. And there were other companies for electric lights, for packet-boats, for tramways, for torpedoes, for telephones, for hotels, for newspapers, and a hundred other things. All these were started, promoted, shoved off by Mr. Gallaway; he underwrote them, he bought and sold their shares, he created a demand for them and got them quoted. One thing Mr. Gallaway never did; he did not become a director, nor did he buy anything, estate, business, or steamers; nor did he in any way at all associate his name publicly with the company, nor was he in the least degree responsible for the statements made in the prospectus. The sudden acquisition of money made him horribly extravagant in his personal expenditure. This is a very usual result when one has had no money in early life; it comes, I believe, from an exaggerated idea of the pleasure of spending money. Girls, for instance, who seldom have much money of their own, regard the abstract process of buying as one of the most enjoyable things in the world. Fortunately the pleasure does not depend on the amount spent, so that it may be enjoyed as much by the workman's wife when she goes out with her basket on a Saturday evening as by her richer sister driving in her carriage to Swan and Edgar's. As for Olinthus, he enjoyed buying things as much as any girl might do. And he bought continuously, and bought everything that was worthless and costly.

The Village watched his career with interest almost breathless. It was wonderful to believe that one of themselves should become so illustrious. Unfortunately Mr. Colliber, whose experience and criticism at this juncture would have been of

great value, was only at home on Sundays, and came no more to the village-green. And nobody could guess at all what he went to town for. Probably on business connected with his failure.

'I always thought well of the boy,' said Sir Charles, 'ever since the day when he declared that he should imitate my example. It was nobly said. My example! One has not lived in vain.'

'A wise example indeed,' said Mr. Skantlebury.

'I should say he was imitating Mr. Colliber's example,' said Mr. Massey. 'I once hoped that my own son might distinguish himself in the higher walks of finance. Oh, Heaven! What a thing it is! I heard on good authority in the City the other day that Olinthus Gallaway must have made a hundred thousand already.' A waiter in a City dining-room had told him. 'Everything he touches turns to gold. No one knows what a promoter of companies may make. If my son—but he is gone. Why did he go away from London? Why did he leave the place where all the money is? If he had gone to New York it would have been something. But to go all the way to China!'

'It sometimes occurs to me,' said Mr. Skantlebury softly, 'that perhaps Olinthus—I should say Mr. Olinthus—might put one on to a good thing now and then if he were asked. What do you say, Massey?'

A gleam of light flashed from the eyes of the ingenious Mr. Massey.

The three sisters of Olinthus regarded him with a kind of bewildered awe. How could he have become so clever? As a boy he had bullied them; he was selfish, domineering, dogmatic; he always took the best of everything; he made himself the master of the house. In those days they used to rebel; they used to cry, to call him names, to wish he was gone into the City for good. But how could he have become so clever? Why, he was a dull boy; he cared nothing about books; he seemed stupid. Now, however, they found it quite natural that one who was going to be so great should in his youth bully his sisters. His stupidity was not real; it was only that he had not found out his line. He conferred honour upon them by coming to visit them; they sat round him and heard him talk of the dinners he gave, the men he invited, the houses he went to, the chambers he lived in, the money he was making. And did he not give them each a *dot*, which meant a sweetheart as well? And did he not buy the house for them? And all of it made out of nothing, by buying what had no existence and selling what he had not got. Was there ever such a brother? And he dined with countesses.

'It is a pity,' said his mother, 'that he will marry Claire. I say nothing against her; and, to be sure, even for the richest

man, what she will have when her father dies will come in comfortably. But, my dear, if Olinthus were to marry the dear Countess! I should really feel his success more sometimes I think I don't feel it enough—if I were actually to see him drive up to the door with a countess on his arm! Mr. Olinthus Callaway and the Countess! How well it would sound!'

'Perhaps,' said the eldest, 'Olinthus will not ask Claire any more. You know he is not obliged to.'

'Let us hope he will not,' said his mother.

'Perhaps,' said the youngest, who was a Fool, and was often told so, 'Claire will take one of the others.'

They took all their news to Claire. She heard it with a smile which meant nothing. A strange girl! She knew that he was in love with her, but she never blushed or made any outward signs of confusion when his name was mentioned. Yet she owned that the gift of the *dot* to each of the girls was a kind and generous action. And when they began to hint at the superiority of Olinthus over the other two boys she instantly froze.

From time to time Olinthus himself called upon her, and talked of his own surpassing achievements.

'You see, Claire,' he would say, repeating himself, 'I really have done most wonderfully well.'

'You have, indeed, Olinthus.'

'Everybody says there isn't a cleverer man in the City. They do, indeed! I don't tell you that out of boastfulness, but because you don't hear—of course you can't—what goes on in the City, and I want you to know.'

'Your sisters tell me.'

'As for other fellows—fellows of my own standing—there isn't one to show a candle to me; not one, even among Stock Exchange fellows who started with lots of money. If you only knew how much we—I mean—I—made last week.'

'Please do not tell me that. You might turn my head!'

'And, I say, Claire'—he turned very red—'you know, more than a whole year has gone. I promised to wait for three years, I know. But if you could shorten the time——'

'I cannot even talk about it,' Claire said.

'As for that, I believe the Countess would take me—I do, indeed.'

'Then, Olinthus, pray ask the Countess.'

'Now, Claire, don't get up. I did not mean—I assure you I do not really care for——'

She burst out laughing.

'You may laugh if you like. But, now, do listen for a moment. If you come to compare me with the other fellows, where are they? One is a clerk on two or three hundred a year in China. You'll never see him again. And the other's a pauper fellow who writes. By Jove! I saw him the other day going

down Piccadilly with a book in his hand, like a shopman, and a shabby old hat. I almost felt inclined to stop my horse and ask him if I could lend him a sovereign, I did indeed.'

'At any rate, I am glad you resisted the temptation,' Claire replied with impatience.

'Oh, yes, of course; it was only a passing thought, you know—poor beggar! Shorten the time, Claire. You're just the age to marry, and just the kind of girl for a rich man. Look here, I'll give you a house in the Cromwell Road, or Lancaster Gate, if you like that better. You shall have your carriage, and your footman and all; you shall, indeed.'

'Finish what you have to say, Olinthus.'

'The Countess will call upon you. She will do anything I tell her. The other day I whispered to her, "Buy Turks;" she did—she bought a lot; and she made a little sweep.'—It will be seen that the Countess had, after all, begun to operate.—'She's truly grateful. When I dined with her the other night there was a lord, and an honourable, and a major, and a couple of real ladies. After dinner we had a little Nap, and then a little baccarat. I lost seventy pounds. What's that? But it is just to show you, Claire, that you shall go into tip-top society.'

'Thank you very much.'—What did she laugh again for?—'And, Olinthus, if you feel tempted, you know, at any time to ask the Countess, don't let me stand in the way.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE POWER OF SYMPATHY.

Allen continued to go to the little house at Bayswater. He went there daily on some pretext—because he had an idea; because he thought Gertrude might have one; to take them somewhere—there are plenty of shows in the early spring; to read with them; simply to sit and talk with them.

When they went to Richmond for the summer he went too, and lived under the same roof.

There are great possibilities about Richmond even yet, although it is built over, and approached by a dozen lines. You may, with a girl so young and so strong as Isabel, tramp undisturbed over miles of wild park, where the heron and the wild duck fly over the broad mere, and the rabbits scuttle away through the fern, and the deer look up with suspicion as you pass. It is a place where you may read poetry or make love—Allen read poetry; where you may sit dreaming while the silence and the sunshine make your heart calm and restful; where you may talk of vast, shadowy, gigantic plans for the future—the conquest of the world—if you are young and your

companion be *sympathique*, as Isabel was. Beyond the park are great barren commons, which give one a sense of freedom delightful to feel after months among the houses; they are covered with yellow gorse, among whose flowers there is kept up a continual and restful humming caused by the great fat bumble bees and the heavy drones, who roll in and out among the spikes. A delightful place and a delightful time! It is not so wild as Hainault, but it seems so much farther off from the City and from money. Or there is the river. Isabel could row, and taught Allen. They spent long summer evenings on the water among the swans and the midges and the lilies, floating along in the twilight, listening to the plash of the current in the leaves and the leap of a fish. It was best when the sun went down and they floated down the river in the twilight. Sometimes they sat in silence, sometimes Allen followed aloud the current of his thoughts. He was still a very young man, although he was three-and-twenty: he was still full of thoughts, speculations, and wonder. Such a mind as his never passes out of wonderland into the region where people go about their business, each wrapped in his own concerns, with never a thought of the things around them; he told all his thoughts to Isabel, just as he had told them all to Claire. And there came upon the spirit of the girl a feeling that she was the support and stay of Allen, and a jealousy of that other woman who would take him from her, and have no support or stimulus to give him.

In those days Claire was forgotten—she seemed so far away. Yet to Isabel she was so near, because she stood between Allen and herself. Of love and its first beginnings, of love's decay and death, of changed heart, which had promised to be so loyal—who can fitly speak?

The summer passed away; Allen went not once to Hainault. He wrote, it is true. Was it Claire's quick fancy, or were the letters constrained and forced?

'Isabel, I have had a blissful time,' said Allen, when the day came for their return. 'It has been one long basking in the sunshine—save for the confounded Organ. How can I thank you for making me so happy?'

'It is enough,' she said, with a slight blush in her cheek and a quickened light in her eye; 'it is enough, for us, that you have been happy.'

'I go back,' he went on, 'to carry out some of our plans.'

'Your plans, Allen, not mine.'

'Yes, yours; we have talked them over together. Our plans, Isabel. Let me associate the work, if it is done worthily, with the memory of our summer holiday together.'

He spoke loftily, as if the plans were the concern of the universal world. They were, indeed, vast enough; but they were, unfortunately, vague. Yet he was not making love. He was simply happy with his new-made friends. He was so far

true to Claire that he had no thought of love. He was also, so far, stupid and inexperienced.

'You spoil me, Gertrude,' he said one day. 'You make me continually talk about my own work and myself. It is your fault if I am an egoist, I will write a poem about the man who was spoiled by kindness. Do you remember Coppée's poem about the child who was picked up by two old men, and killed by their excessive love and kindness? You picked me up, you see, and you have been so kind that I have become full of my own importance. Yet I am only a bladder blown out with wind.'

'Every poet is an egoist, my dear,' said Gertrude. 'It is allowed him, and we think it is admirable.'

But the holiday came to an end, and Allen returned to his own lodgings, and began to think about those vast schemes of work which were to be accomplished.

'Has it been wise, Gertrude?' asked Lawrence, concerning this holiday. He thought of Isabel; but she thought of Allen.

'I think so, Lawrence. He has learned a great deal; indeed, he learns with great quickness; he can talk well now—even brilliantly; he knows the small change of conversation; he represses his enthusiasms, and yet he has not lost them.'

'He is not likely to lose them, with you.'

'Take him now, Lawrence, and make him work. He wants your stimulus after our sympathy; he dreams too much. Isabel could give him both stimulus and sympathy. But then, you see, we must consider that she could not be always giving them to a man already engaged.'

'Is Engledew engaged?'

'As good as engaged.'

'Which is, perhaps, another reason,' said Lawrence, 'why he should not be allowed to go about quite so much with Isabel.'

'The child has no thought,' Gertrude replied, 'of such a thing. Indeed, Lawrence, you do her wrong.'

He shook his head with preternatural wisdom and went his way. But he waited an opportunity to find Isabel alone, and then he spoke to her cautiously. He talked of their summer holiday and of Allen. She answered him without any blushing or confusion, in her quiet way. Allen stayed with them, she said; they were together all day long; they read poetry and talked over all kinds of literary plans. They had a very delightful time.

'Is he really engaged, Isabel?' he asked. 'If so, do you think she would like it?'

She blushed at this unexpected thrust.

'He has proposed to a young lady who will give him an answer in a year or two. Why do you ask, Lawrence?'

'There was a time, Isabel,' he replied, 'when there was another young man who might have asked for sympathy.'

'You, Lawrence?' she laughed, but not freely. 'But one cannot give sympathy to a mathematician.'

'But you can to men who make literature.'

'Of course.'

'Then, Isabel, you may give it to me, if you can. I am also—even I—of the literary trade. Yes: do not look astonished. Listen. My science is a sham and a flam and a humbug. I am a writer of tales and things, as my father and my mother and all the rest of them were before me.'

'You, Lawrence?'

'Even I. What will Gertrude say?'

'You to write stories, Lawrence? You, the only man of clear head in the family? Oh! it is impossible.'

'Stories in prose and verse, Isabel. I have even sent things to a comic paper. Comediettas, feuilletons, *vers de société*, all, I produce. It has been on my conscience for a long time, but I never before had so good an opportunity of telling my secret.'

'Oh!' she gasped, 'you—too!'

'It is like gout or early baldness. You can't get it out of the blood. Now, Isabel, for some of that sympathy which you give this fellow Engledew.'

She laughed and blushed.

'Shall I row you in the evening in the Serpentine? Shall we walk together in the Gardens? Shall we sit on a pair of penny chairs side by side beneath the trees? I have many plans to tell you. I am full of thoughts. I can even read you my poetry.'

She blushed again, Mephistopheles himself could not more artfully have conveyed to Isabel the plain truth, which she would have hidden.

'Sympathy can only be given to a sympathetic subject,' said the girl.

'I have been a great fool, Isabel,' said Lawrence. 'I thought any time would do.' Here Isabel blushed again. 'I thought it was safe to wait. Now you may rest easy, Isabel. I shall say no more about it unless, in a year or two, this shadowy young lady—whom Allen once thought he loved—says yes.'

Isabel gave him her hand.

'You are always considerate, Lawrence,' she said. 'Please never say anything more about it at all, because it will be impossible, even though that young lady should say yes—which of course she is sure to do.'

'Why is she sure?'

'Why? Oh! Lawrence. The other two who proposed at the same time are City men. Would any girl take a City man? Think of it—a money-making man, a man who buys and sells, when she might have a poet—like Allen?'

CHAPTER XIII.

TELL ME WHAT.

'ENGLEDEW,' said Lawrence that very same day, 'let us have it out. You have been wasting your time all the summer.'

'I know I have,' Allen replied. 'But I have come back to work.'

'Gertrude is sentimental; if you go there too much you will become flabby. Man's work and woman's work are different. You must keep your work out of that house. Come to my club and see the men who work. They do not hang about apron-strings.'

There is a table d'hôte at that club every evening. The tables on this evening were full.

'Look round you,' said Lawrence, who knew them all. 'Three fourths of these men are writing-men. Most of them are journalists. There are one or two novelists among them, and some are specialists. If you listen to their talk you will hear nothing about the glory of their work, and they are mere Sadducees about its immortality.'

If you think of it you cannot draw any face which shall immediately be recognised as that of the *littérateur*. Perhaps his characteristic face has not yet been determined by long generations of work. The profession is the youngest of the learned callings. One can draw for one's self the typical solicitor, the typical barrister, the typical clerk, the typical physician, the typical ritualist even; but the typical literary man has not yet been been figured. Mostly, however, he wears spectacles or *pince-nez*.

'There are,' said Lawrence presently, 'fourteen thousand persons who live by literature in London. Fourteen thousand! How many of them succeed in the way you would call success?'

'Why this preamble?' asked Allen.

'Because the time has come when you must make your spoon or spoil that horn. You have got to do as well as the half-dozen best of those fourteen thousand men and women. That seems a considerable ambition, doesn't it? Because, you see, you take it seriously. As for me, I take it carelessly. I write my little comedies, and they get printed, and I am paid. I am content. Life should be made up of a little light comedy, a little love-making, a few epigrams, a little champagne, and a little verse-making. That is enough for me. You, glutton that you are, want to do good work and get what you call fame. You won't get much by magazine articles on French poets.'

Allen replied not.

'You must be a dramatist, or a novelist, or both. Go at it,

therefore, hard, as if you were going at physic or the law. Gertrude has done a good deal for you, now go and do the rest yourself.'

It was true. Lawrence's words implied a great deal more than appeared on the surface.

'I know,' said Allen humbly, 'what you and your friends have done for me. It seems incredible to me that I could have dared, being so ignorant of the world, even to dream of success. I know more, now, but——' he sighed. 'what is the use of knowledge if it is only to make one feel one's insignificance?'

'No man,' said Lawrence, as wise as Solomon, 'is insignificant who can write, and has ideas. As for knowledge, you know everything that was to be learned, except what your friend, the Frenchman, could not teach you—the ways of the social world. Isabel has told me something of your plans. Was it pleasant to dream away a summer on the river with a pretty girl? You poets get the best of everything. Up, dreamer.' He laid his hand upon Allen's shoulder. 'Go and work.'

He went away uneasy, dissatisfied, waiting for inspiration, his brain filled with vast fabrics which crumbled to dust when they were touched—a romance, which should be a joy for ever; a great and magnificent play, which should never leave the stage—do we not know the poet who wants a great subject, the painter who has got a beautiful piece of canvas on his easel but cannot decide what to fill it with?

He was so restless that he found the house at Bayswater intolerable. Gertrude's reverence for literature made him feel like an arrogant pretender. Isabel's questioning eyes seemed to reproach him for having done nothing, whereas she only wondered what was troubling him. He was so restless that he was fain to the Forest and seek consolation of Claire.

She might have had a great deal to tell him, but he asked for no news of herself; she might have shown him her new house and all her pretty new things, but he regarded them not, being full of his own trouble. She was more beautiful than before, but he paid no heed to her beauty; the sunshine of good fortune lay upon her face, it had lost the line of care which always settles on the forehead of women who do daily work, but he saw it not; she was sympathetic, and he took, without returning, all the sympathy which she had to give. In such a frame of mind a poet is sublimely selfish. Perhaps, as Gertrude said, it is allowed to him.

'Tell me, Allen,' she said, 'what it is.'

He had come for consolation, but it was necessary to explain why, and he could not explain. How tell anybody, even Claire, that he was burning to write splendid things, and was miserable because the way was not yet clear? The sunshine of September lay upon the gentle slopes and the old trees of the Forest, but

it might as well have been a day in November; Claire was holding his hand and looking into his face with her sweet, frank eyes, but he saw and felt nothing.

'Are you not satisfied with what you have done, Allen?' she asked. 'Yet it seems to me so good a beginning.'

I believe there is nothing more wretched, more humiliating, than the feeling that you are not, and never can be, the one thing in the world you ardently desire to be.

'I am not satisfied,' he broke out. 'Oh, Claire, what things I hoped to do! And see—— Nothing. Half-a-dozen papers. That—and the confounded Leather Organ.'

He left her abruptly without another word and strode off through the Forest.

Claire looked to see him return in the evening, and made a little feast for him, and her father promised sympathy with the work. They waited dinner till the sun went down at eight, but he came not; for he was walking, dinnerless, full of a kind of rage as of one who possesses a great art yet cannot exercise it, along the road to Abridge, and from there along the north of Epping Forest to Copt Hall, and so by a long round to Chingford, where he took the train to London, and went home and to bed, tired, angry and horribly hungry.

For Claire could not help him. Sympathy will not make a man succeed; he must work, he repeated. And what to do? He must work, or he must creep back to his own place and die in obscurity.

CHAPTER XIV.

IT IS THIS.

Relief came to him after many days. One evening it chanced that his restless feet carried him to that broad thoroughfare which runs through Islington. It reminded him of Whitechapel; it was a busy and crowded time, between nine and ten. The day had been hot, it was in early autumn; the people streamed along the pavement in a never-ending procession; the workmen lounging with pipes in their mouths, the work-girls hastening as if there was not a moment to be lost, and talking to each other as they went in voices of exasperation; the married women carried baskets; there was the bustle, turmoil, toil, and roll of the streets, which he remembered of those days when with Will he roamed about the place. The years rolled backwards, the old thoughts returned to him: if one could only keep the magnificent thoughts which come to boys and to early manhood! if one could only remember them in part! To Allen it seemed suddenly as if he had been forgetting or

neglecting the only thing worth following. His brain reeled, he was fain to stop and lean beside a lamp-post. Then he stood still and watched. And then there befell him, again, a strange and wondrous thing: the crowds of people became a long and never-ending procession of human faces. He gazed upon each as they passed him by; there were faces worn, faces sad, faces eager, faces anxious, faces sensual, faces pure, faces young, faces old, faces animal-like, vulture-like, snake-like, ape-like, leonine; faces remorseful, faces expectant, faces conscious, faces doomed—where were the happy faces gone?

Then there fell upon him a strange feeling, which seemed as if it was an old feeling, and that he must have felt it once before—of trouble and sympathy; each face in the long procession was *alone*; it looked neither to the right nor to the left, it looked straight before as it went past him. And while he looked and felt no surprise or wonder, save that he should have waited so long for this thing to happen to him, he saw among the multitude one face that he knew and remembered. Alas! he had forgotten that face too long. This face turned and looked straight in his eyes; he saw the rest no more, but followed walking side by side.

It was the face of the girl whom he had seen so long ago and forgotten; but then she was younger, and her features—like those of a girl of fifteen—hardly formed; and her figure was then indistinct, a thing of sun and shadow. Now, she was fully grown and shapely; he saw that she had sweet eyes, large and beautiful, but they were full of tears and wonder and reproach. She asked him why he had neglected her so long; she said that she had been waiting and looking for him; then she took him by the hand and led him along the road among the passengers, who made way for her though she was but a spectre of Allen's brain; and she talked with him; her voice was low yet he heard it above the roll of the carriages. He listened as she spoke; he had heard her story before, but never before had he realised the strength of it, the sorrow of it, the splendour of it. While she told it, with details which before he knew not of, with surroundings which before he had not understood, he heard another voice which said, 'All your verses, all your essays, are foolish things. Listen to this girl's story.' He listened—he heard that story told all over again from the beginning; he saw that when he heard it before he could not wholly comprehend it; now he understood all. And he knew that he was going to do a splendid thing, because he felt and saw that it would be a real thing. How simple it seems and yet how hard it is—to see the truth!

He went home; he could not rest; the story of that girl fired his brain. It had been lying there, forgotten, for three years; it had grown without his knowledge; it had been fed and nourished by every walk he took in the streets of London,

by every conversation which took him out of books and taught him something of life. And suddenly it had sprung up fully grown; it was a tale now of genuine flesh and blood, warm, natural, full of love and passion, hope and fear. Oh! wise Hector! Oh! great philosopher! thus to discern that the best part of education lies outside the wisdom of books!

Yes; it was a great thing he was going to do. As he paced his room the story unrolled itself: he seemed to see, actually before his eyes, the scenes he was going to describe; he heard the voices of his characters; he laughed and wept; he threw his arms about and acted the story; in dumb show he played it, without words he constructed it.

Happy the man who thus beholds, almost in the flesh, the creatures of his imagination; happy he who is possessed by a story. Allen had found among the meanest streets of the meanest part of London a rose of maidenhood, as tender, as true, as sweet as if she had been the descendant of a hundred earls. It was not to be a story with the false, old, foolish ring of the wicked duke and the virtuous dressmaker, but a real story, with human life and love and shattered hopes, and the suffering of the innocent for the sins of the fathers and mothers, of women for the sins of men.

But, as yet, it was not written. In fact, Allen discovered—a great many people have made this discovery—that it is not enough to conceive a story, enough even to work it all out in your own mind, so that you know perfectly all your characters, with their faces and figures and secret thoughts: the difficulty is to shape it in dramatic form, and, above all, to begin it. You know how Hector Philipon was seized with that great thought of his which so mightily buffeted him. As were Hector's struggles, so were Allen's. The babe was ready for the birth, but the hour of travail was not yet come. In the telling of a tale, well begun is half done. You may be dull in your second chapter—in fact, you are pretty sure to be dull, because things have got to be explained—but to be dull in the first chapter is, indeed, a fatal thing.

Allen made a hundred different attempts to begin his story—a hundred times he tore up his work disgusted; it was as if his heroine was imploring him, with entreaties which could not be denied, to tell her story, yet he could not.

There was once a man who, like Allen, had conceived a story; like him, he could not begin it. I think he could never fit a name to his leading character, which was the principal reason why he did not begin it. Now, by reason of long waiting, his story dried up in that man's brain, and as it dried it killed, somehow, all the firm qualities of that brain, so that it became incapable of any more good work at all, and finally went soft. And the poor man had to be locked in a little room of a great house. They said it was hard work, but that was not the

case—it was Suppressed Story, which is as fatal as Suppressed Gout.

Allen reached that point when his story must be told or else it would begin to dry up and so destroy his brain. If that had happened, I suppose he would have presently returned to the Forest and wandered about for the rest of his days playing a melancholy strain upon an oaten pipe, a blighted shepherd. Fortunately, the moment came when the struggle ceased and the tale could be told. He wrote it in a kind of rapture, working without pause or rest, even neglecting the Organ. He wrote, without correction or revision, chapter by chapter, until it was finished. And then he put his manuscript away and returned to the streets, as one might seek the fountains of Helicon. He walked about now, watching the people with a purpose—he wanted to know more exactly how they talked, what they said, what they thought, what they did, even how they were dressed. There is no detail in the comedy of Humanity too small to be noted: nothing, hardly, that cannot be quoted, described, or suggested.

After a week or so he returned to his story and wrote it all over again, every word. Before, it had been an outline sketch; now, he made it a picture. He might add touches here and there, but it was finished; he could do but little more to improve it. He put it away, his mind at rest, and began, with interest, the study of another French poet.

A strange thing happened to him then. The girl whose story he had written, who had been living in his brain so long, suddenly vanished clean away and died completely out of his mind; if he thought of her at all it was as of a person in some far-off country whom in olden time he had known, much as an honest tar, all of the olden time, with a wife in every port, might while at Wapping think of his wife at Calcutta. Nor did he, for the time, even look at his manuscript again.

I do not think that Allen will ever know a happiness greater than that which he enjoyed during this time when the fountain he had opened ran with a swift and steady stream full and clear. Other writers have shown us the rustic life with the rustic speech; others have shown sailor's life, soldier's life, artist life, society life, clerical life, all kinds of life. Allen was the first to portray the life which seems so monotonous and so mean, yet is so full of possibilities, so varied in its types. Not for nothing had Allen tramped those thousands of miles with Will and listened everywhere for the Voice of the People. He had found it at last.

Allen kept his story a secret. He would tell nobody, not even Isabel. After a time he took it to his friendly editor, who received it without any enthusiasm and with obvious distrust. He said that such things are a drug in the market—which is only true of bad stories—and he told Allen that really he had better stick to his own line of light and appreciative criticism. So

great a pity for a man to go outside his line! And he presently sent the story back, and Allen was perfectly certain that he had not taken the trouble to turn over the pages. Now he knew very well that this monthly magazine was always wanting good tales, and he knew that his own was good, and that if his editor could only be got to read it dispassionately he would take it with joy. He therefore invented a little plot, for the carrying out of which he secured the services and secrecy of his old friend, the foreman.

He had the story set up in type, the same type as that used for the magazine, and when the next packet of proof was sent to the editor he contrived that his story should be sent by mistake with them. The editor received his proofs and presently read the story. Now, when it was read, that editor fell into a strange doubt and trouble of soul; for he could not remember, for the life of him, that he had ever read the MS. of that story. Yet it was a good story, an excellent story, one of the best stories he had ever read. The more he read it the more he was struck with its power. He took it home with him and showed it to his wife. The influence of woman in editorial is as great as in political circles—only it is not yet suspected. His wife said it really was a most powerful and real story.

He then sent to the printer for the manuscript and name of the author. The foreman came himself to explain that it was the work of Mr. Engledew, who had had the tale set up for himself, and that it was, he added mendaciously, a mistake of his own, which he deeply deplored.

Then the editor saw that he had been the victim of a heartless deception, and would have wept had he not been too busy. He therefore wrote to Allen asking for the use of that story; and when, a few days afterwards, he gave Allen an excellent dinner at the club, he refrained from any words which might lead his guest to guess that he was discovered.

This was the beginning; this the way in which Allen found —himself. The rest was easy, though it might take time, because, with a short story of twenty or thirty pages, one does not advance at once to that enviable level at which one finds editors holding out their hands and asking—positively asking—for contributions.

'Allen,' cried Gertrude with effusion, 'I congratulate you. My dear, you have made a noble beginning in the best of all ways. We are proud of you.'

'I kept it a secret,' said Allen, 'because I was resolved that if I failed I would go away and never come near you any more. I would treat myself as an impostor.'

'Never come near us again? Why, Allen, my first three novels all failed, but yet I persevered. And you—oh! my dear, mine were poor things, indeed, compared with what yours will be. Go away? Why, what little faith is here!'

'What does Claire say?' asked Isabel quickly.

'I have not seen her yet,' said Allen. 'I am going to see her to-morrow.'

'As a beginning,' said Hector, 'you have written verses. All men of genius write verses. Most abandon them. You have studied human life; you, therefore, in the next place tell a story. Most men of genius tell stories. You may next advance to the better work.'

'Better work?' asked Allen blankly. 'What better work?'

'You ask?' Hector replied. 'You who know what the people want?'

'How should I know what they want?' said Allen impatiently.

'How else could you write this story?'

This question ought to have afforded the young writer boundless satisfaction. There is this quality in a good work of art, that it tells more to those who study it than to him who made it. Hector read this story, and forthwith began to consider it from points of view not contemplated by the writer, and especially as if it was designed with a view to things practical.

'Why,' he replied, 'I was telling the story of a girl. What else was I doing?'

'You had no purpose, no design in studying this—model?'

'I told her story. What more? When I had told it she—she went away.'

He appealed to Claire with a puzzled look of disappointment. What did her father mean.

'Tell Allen, *mon père*,' said Claire, 'that you are proud of him.'

'I am—proud,' said Hector with a gulp. 'You are satisfied with your art, Allen?'

'I am more than satisfied,' he replied.

Hector sat down. He had then failed. Claire looked at him with imploring eyes. Allen, alone, of the three understood nothing. Then Hector rose again and began to speak, addressing the whole world.

'Is it,' he asked, 'that the artist thinks of nothing but his work? When Raphael painted a beautiful woman, did he not fall in love with her? When Dante wrote the "Inferno," did he drop no tears for the unhappy, or did he think of rhyme and phrase? It is a magnificent world—for the artist. Allen, you have a splendid chance before you. For you know the *prolétaire*. He is at your feet. You have heard his cries; you know his voice; you know his pains. Take your sketch-book with you. Behold! There is a boy in rags—ah, pretty boy with rags and dirt, and uncombed hair, and hungry eyes. You paint him. Ah! What genius! What a portrait! Let us go on, we are artists—all the Levites followed that profession—let us go on.

Is that not the girl you have already drawn? You have forgotten her already. Yet you painted her only a week ago. Her eyes are as full of tears, and her heart is as heavy as then. The poor girl! The poor girl! Here they come, all of them—the thin man who asks questions—a dangerous man; the brute man who drinks rum and kicks his wife—you can easily draw him; *enfin*, the whole procession of those who toil. Make your sketches, listen to their talk. Let your work be faithful. Oh, it is great! It is noble! Art is the only thing worth following.'

'My master!' cried Allen, overwhelmed.

Claire breathed freely. Allen had not seen the delicate satire of the words. Afterwards he might remember, but now he was too full of his story and its success.

'Allen,' Hector added, 'I have made a mistake. I dreamed that you might become a Luther. Happy boy! You have become, instead—a Lamartine.'

PART III.—THE REWARD OF THE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

A WOMAN'S REASONS.

I WISH to tell, in my own words, how I chose between the three men who had done me the greatest honour that a man can confer upon a woman—the offer of his love and service. It is, I know, just as true that no greater honour can happen to a man than the confidence and love of a woman. And yet—to me—because I am a woman, I suppose, it does not seem quite so great a thing. My father, in the gallant and old-fashioned way with which he always talks of women, reminding one of old books, powdered wigs, patches, and hoop petticoats, says, that the highest distinction and glory for a man is to have it recorded that he was loved by many women. I suppose, however, that any man would be more than contented with the love of one, if he loved her in return.

At the age of eighteen I was told by these three young men that they were in love with me. I was myself too young at the time to comprehend all that this meant. Perhaps, too, my lovers were themselves too young and too ignorant of the world to understand the importance of what they offered. If my mother had been living she would have taught me that these young men proposed to give me nothing less than their whole lives, with the fruits of all the work they would ever do. Can any man offer more? But my father did not teach me this: he spoke a little about the favour of my smiles and the great happiness which awaited the one whom I should accept—things which, I dare say, turned my head—and then he said no more about the matter, but carefully avoided it, until the time was close at hand, when the decision had to be made. I do not say that I never thought about it: there was not a single day, to tell the truth, in which I did not have it on my mind. But always, until near the end, as of a thing far off, which need not disturb my mind.

No one must think that I made, consciously at least, any difference between two of the boys. As for the third, I knew very well, even at the beginning, what answer I should have

for him. But I speak of the two in whose delightful society I had spent always, in all seasons and in all weathers, some part of every day. Yes; every day; for on half-holidays, if it was fine, we walked or ran in the Forest; and if it was wet they came to the Cottage and we read or played; and in the evenings they came to talk French; and on Sunday afternoons they came to talk or to walk. Every day I saw them; they were my brothers; I could not love one more or one less; both were kind and thoughtful; both were as dear to me as one human soul can be to another. I have made my decision, now, and made one contented, I hope, for life—yea, and for the after-life as well, through all the ages, when we shall together, and side by side, grow more and more in the spiritual life. Yet, still, when I think of the other my heart goes out to him, and I wish that he, too, were with us in the house, as in the old times. I could never refrain or cease from loving both these boys.

Their own homes were not happy. Their parents were dreadfully poor. I do think that there is nothing worse for a boy than the continual pressure of grinding poverty. I have seen Will clench his hands as he spoke of the shifts to which he was put in order to make a decent appearance at school. I have seen Allen weep with bitterness for the same cause. Allen, at least, had the satisfaction of knowing that his own poverty was due to no fault of his father, unless it be a fault to trust an old friend, your partner. Poor Will had not that consolation; he knew that his father had ruined himself and thrown away a fortune in the pursuit of mad-brained schemes; it was difficult for him, remembering his father's folly, to keep the fifth commandment in spirit as well as in letter. We, to be sure, were poor enough, but then we had the French thrift, and so we seemed richer. At all events, we lived contented with quite simple things, and did not repine at what we could not prevent. Mr. Massey, on the other hand, continually lamented the ill-fortune which had robbed him of the vast wealth he looked to make, grumbled daily over the plainness of his food, and spent his evenings in examining the papers relating to each scheme and its failure. Allen's mother, for her part, could never recover from the shock of her husband's dreadful death, brooded over his calamities, and lost no opportunity of exhorting her son to wipe out the disgrace of his father's misfortunes by making money for himself. Poor woman! She was brought up to consider poverty a sin, and failure as the greatest offence against her fellow-creatures and himself that a man can commit. So poor Allen's boyhood was made wretched, save for the happiness which he enjoyed with my father and myself. And so, in this way, from the very first, the boy was led to conceive a deadly hatred of the City and all that belongs to money and money making.

Never any boy, I should think, was so fond of books as

Allen. He read all that he could lay his hands upon, in French and English. When he first went into the City he used to save half, out of the shilling which was meant for dinner, in order to buy books. He read all that we had, all he could borrow from everybody in the village: though I suspected nothing at the time, it seems to me now to have been quite certain from the beginning that he must become a man of letters, and I can never sufficiently thank my father for finding this out and for training him in literature and style, and afterwards in Art, and in the knowledge of actual life, which fitted him for the work he was to do. Of course I knew very well that Allen could never, never take up the active political life of which my father dreamed.

When first he read us his verses I thought that I had never heard anything so bad as they were. But my father saw promise, and encouraged him and led him on step by step to love letters and books more and more. He waited till he was past twenty-one before he could follow the profession of letters, and then he tore himself from the City and plunged into the new world of print and ink with a heart full of courage.

When he refused the appointment in China and told his mother of his resolution, she first implored him to accept the post and then upbraided him, and when she could not alter his purpose she came to my father and begged him to use his influence. When he refused, and assured her that her son was taking the best step to insure his happiness and success, she flew into the most violent passion that I had ever seen. I would not repeat words used in wrath by an angry woman. My father listened without changing his countenance or losing his politeness, though she reproached him for his poverty, for his country, for his profession, for having led Allen away from the business of his life, and even for making him think of love when he ought to have been thinking of money, and for throwing his penniless and designing daughter in the boy's way.

When she went away, with white cheeks and quivering lips, my father shuddered.

'Against the words of an angry woman,' he said, 'there is no reply but silence. Do not cry, Claire, my child. Play music for the peace of our souls. Poor woman! Yet she must have been beautiful once. It is only the happy woman who remains beautiful.'

A few days later I met her in the village; she begged to be forgiven, saying, humbly, that all her hopes had been for her boy to follow in the footsteps of his father, and by his own success to make that disgrace to be forgotten. I told her that, as for the anger, it was forgotten already; and as to the disgrace of which she spoke, that was long since forgotten, and only the pity of it left, because everybody knew how good and honourable a man was her husband. She shook her head and

said I was a girl and did not know all. Then I told her what we hoped of Allen, and how bright and clever he was, and what great prizes in reputation, as well as in money, await those who write beautiful things in prose and verse. But this she could not understand.

Allen did not come back to us for six months, but he wrote telling of the bad luck which his poems encountered everywhere, and the unanimous opinion of publishers about their merits. When, at last, he came, it was to tell us that he had actually got work of a humble kind, yet better than nothing.

And soon after this he told me of his new friends, to whom he owed all the success which he has since obtained. I was very curious about them. There was his friend, Mr. Lawrence Ouvry, who was so wise and knew everything, and especially everything about literature, whose father and mother and all his relations had been poets, editors, novelists. How strange to hear of such a family! And then there was Miss Gertrude Holt, the best and kindest of ladies. It seemed as if our boy was actually on the road to success when he was invited to 'At Homes' crowded with literary people, and it looked like real success when Isabel recited his poems before them all. Then came his first paper in the magazine, which gave him a chance, and this was success! Yet still we were not satisfied; it was not for papers of criticism that Allen entered the profession of letters; nor was it until his first tale appeared that we knew for certain that he was in the right line at last—the line for which his genius was fitted.

He was always the same Allen to me, yet he changed—oh! how much he changed. We lost our eager boy, ignorant of the world, full of enthusiasm and rages, his large eyes aflame with hope or indignation—he was gone. Gertrude—let me call her at once by her name—and Isabel, between them, changed him. They calmed him; they made him fitted for work by praising some of his enthusiasms and cultivating others; they introduced him into society; they led him on, developed him, kept him from trying impossible things, and advised him wisely. It was what most he wanted, the society of ladies who could advise him and give the kind of sympathy which helps a young man. Nothing could be greater than his gratitude. His letters were full of his friends. He was always making excuses to be with them; he was always trying to do something for them; and when he called upon me it was, after he had told me of his own affairs, to talk about Gertrude and Isabel.

'Claire,' he would say, 'we must make up a plot to bring them here. I want you to know them; you will like them as well as I do, and better, if that is possible. Of course, everybody falls in love with Gertrude at once, but you must know both of them.'

I promised I would do what I could to help him in bringing them to the Forest.

Isabel, I could understand, encouraged and pushed him on, while Gertrude kept him back. Now I knew that Gertrude was an old lady, and I always, until I saw her, thought that Isabel was old too, but not so old. This was, perhaps, the reason—though I would fain think otherwise—why I was not in the least jealous of either of them. It is true that I thought little about the decision before me, but yet—when a man has said that he is in love with you—to hear him praise continually another girl might make any woman jealous.

Isabel encouraged him to work, pointing out how this man, or that man, without half his abilities, was pushing his way into notice. Gertrude encouraged him to wait, urging him to give nothing but his best, and letting him understand that his work, as yet, was immature. It was delightful to think that he was so carefully looked after. When I heard that Isabel recited his poems I ought to have known that she was young; a sense of incongruity came over me as I read his letter—one would not like to think of elderly ladies reciting; yet actresses, I suppose, like other women, become old.

As for Will, he, too, wrote to me once a month—long and beautiful letters, telling me everything that he thought I should like best to hear and that would interest me: all about the strange people of China, and the colony of English, Germans, and Americans among whom he lived, so that I seemed to know them all. Then he told me—if this would interest me—what he read, and what his thoughts were upon all kinds of things—nothing, I am sure, improves a man more than to go away and be made to do responsible work by himself. And of the parties that went on, how he had learnt to dance and to ride, and of the dinners and picnics—why, what a life of pleasure and excitement he was leading compared with what he had left behind! And he used to send me presents, such as silk, and things in carved wood of strange fragrance, and chests of choice tea, all with a chivalrous resolution not to say or do anything which might perchance prejudice Allen, which made Will keep praising him and prophesying greatness for him, as if he would rather—though I knew he never really wished—that I would accept Allen than himself. I thought a great deal of Will, almost as much as I did of Allen. And oh! it is so great a pleasure to think of a man as strong, self-reliant, and full of good principles. I pictured to myself the tall, handsome lad becoming a tall and handsome man, stronger than most, braver than any, honest as the day. It would be a cruel thing to wound that noble heart.

I am sorry to say that, when these two went away and Olinthus remained for awhile, he endeavoured to take advantage of his position and presumed to talk to me about abridging the period of waiting. This was ungenerous in him, and when he

found that I thought so he desisted and presently went to London, where he took chambers and lived alone. I saw him very little after this for some time. His sisters did not, in those days, call upon me, and, I think, were greatly displeased that their brother's affections were bestowed 'beneath him.' To be sure I was only a teacher of French—and of everything else—in a girls' school. I had never thought of being called upon or recognised by the ladies in the village. In time one lives down even the sense of social inferiority. My father, for his part, never felt that he could possibly be considered as socially inferior to any one, especially in a village full of bankrupt bourgeois.

Presently we heard, to our great surprise, that Olinthus was making a great fortune. It seemed quite true. He actually became suddenly clever, he who had been always thought so stupid.

He even came himself to tell me so, puffing and swelling his cheeks like a turkey.

'It is really true, Claire,' he said. 'Where is your clever Allen? Starving in a garret. Where is Will Massey? Clerk in a silk house. Where am I? In West-End chambers. I've got a cab and a tiger; I drive into the City every day; I've got a Club; I buy the best cigars and drink the best champagne. When I choose to say the word there is the best society in London open to me.'

'We are very glad to hear it,' I said.

'What has done this?' he asked grandly. 'Reading books? Riding on bicycles? Walking about the streets? Brains, Claire. Brains. Remember that.'

I believe that when he visited his mother and sisters plainness of speech was used as regards the daughters of French masters, and he was given to understand that young men in his position should look higher—very much higher. But he had always been a headstrong boy, and opposition only made him more obstinate. Besides—yes—I am sure that Olinthus was always fond of me, after his fashion.

I did not quite know, then, how he was growing so rich. I was told, but one does not easily understand these things, that it was by buying with nothing and selling for a great deal, or by buying what did not exist and selling what there was none of; which seems absurd. Perhaps it was by pretending to buy of one man and making somebody else believe he was selling; and this, too, seems a strange way of making money. However that may be, he was greatly envied, and Sir Charles, with tears in his eyes, prayed that he might live to see a failure which promised to be greater even than Mr. Colliber's.

It was somewhat less than a year after the boys went away that our good fortune came to us.

I suppose it is ridiculous to confess the thing, but, in truth,

we did not at first understand how such an enormous income could possibly be spent. I know by this time that the income is not large at all, compared with what English people generally call large; yet to us it was a great and splendid fortune, and our eyes were dazzled.

Remember that all we had in the world to live upon was the cottage, which was our own, and some thirty or forty pounds a year, which I believe was mine, and had come to me from my mother. Then my father received seventy-five pounds a year from the school, and I had twenty-five. Altogether a hundred and forty pounds a year. We lived with the greatest simplicity. My father had no expensive tastes at all. Our garden provided us with fruit, vegetables, and flowers. I made my own dresses and trimmed my own hats. I should have made my own boots, too, if I had known how to get inside them in order to sew on the soles. It is dreadful to think so much about such things as boots; and I wore out an immense quantity.

Fancy, if you can, the change from a hundred and forty pounds a year, which means calculation by pence, to twelve hundred pounds a year, which means calculation by sovereigns!

The magnitude of the thing once over, we began to feel how, in a hundred different ways, we might expand our mode of living without changing the simplicity to which we were accustomed. We first resigned our work at the school—I am ashamed to think of the happiness with which I looked forward to doing no more work for money—then we moved into a larger house, a pretty house, too, with gables and a porch, and a great garden. I found one room into which I moved all the dear old shabby furniture of my old room. And then we went up to London and saw all the sights which I had last seen in company with the boys; also, I was able, for the first time in my life, to buy music, books, ribbons, lace, and all the gloves and pretty things I desired. It is such a happiness to buy pretty things! I wished to publish Allen's verses for him, now that we were rich, but my father would not permit it. He would have Allen owe to himself the whole of his success, if he had any; and this my father, full of his own project, refused to consider possible. I think now that he was right. It was certainly better for Allen to acquire hardness by fighting and temporary defeat. And then all the ladies of the village, Lady Withycomb, Mrs. Massey—she was a very stately person, and always looked forward to the time when her son would find money enough to start some more of her husband's schemes again—Mrs. Gallaway, and the rest, called upon me. They came and made pretence as if I had only just come into residence, and were kind as to a stranger, and spoke of my father as an interesting foreigner whom they should study with pleasure and advantage, and of whom they had just heard for the first time. When they

went away they shook hands warmly, and said they hoped that they would be able to see a great deal of us, and that we would call often. It really was delightful! My father shrugged his shoulders and asked if we were really more virtuous to-day than we had been yesterday; and I laughed. Yet I was pleased. Whether people have small minds or not, one likes being recognised. They only treated me as they treated each other. No one called on Mrs. Skantlebury because her husband had made money in the retail way, but they all called on Mrs. Massey because her husband had failed in the wholesale way.

I was especially pleased with the behaviour of Olinthus's sisters. Before the arrival of the fortune they always got out of my way if they met me, to avoid speaking. As soon as the knowledge of our accession to wealth was established they all three called together, and were most friendly, and begged that I would consider their home my own—for the sake of dear Olinthus.

When we were fully established in our new house, and had received the calls of our neighbours, my father opened a subject of considerable importance. He began one morning by remarking that in France, even in the provincial towns, ladies have their evenings, and there is society. Again, that in some parts of London, as he was credibly informed, there were clubs or societies for singing, and young people danced, and the evening was not considered as a dull three hours of preparation for a long night of bed.

'In this village, my daughter,' he said, 'I observe, with regret'—he had got into the habit of speaking about himself as Sir Charles and everybody else spoke about him, namely, as a new comer—'with great regret, that there is no society at all; no lady has an evening. Claire, it is for you to reform this state of things.'

'What can I do?' I asked.

'You will, my child,' he said with solemnity, 'create a *salon*.'

I was to create a *salon*. Alas! where were the materials? My father left me to think over the idea. Of course, I thought about it. By this time I had heard of Gertrude's 'At Homes.' Could I not create a *salon* in the same manner? But then I should have to make my evenings pleasant, and we knew no interesting people at all.

'Can I'—it was after a sleepless night—'can I be at home on Saturday evenings?'

'Nothing more easy,' said my father. 'In fact, you are always at home on that and on every other evening, except when we go to the pit—I beg your pardon, Claire—since our inheritance—to the dress-circle, of the theatre.'

'And could we get any one to come?'

'Nothing, again, more easy,' he replied, just as if he had

been in English society all his life. 'You will attract the elder people with a little supper, and the younger'—he paused in order to give point to the advice, but then he loves an epigram so much—'with a little love.'

'The supper is easy: but who is to make the love?'

'That, my child, they will make for themselves.' And then he spread his hands, and smiled as if he had said something happy.

These general maxims in which my father delights are very well, but they do not help much. For instance, how can the girls make love if there are no young men? Now there were no young men in the village at all, since the boys went away.

Nevertheless, I thought it would be delightful to have an evening, if people would come. What could we do?

I remembered how Isabel recited Allen's verses, and I made up a little plan for an evening's amusement.

It was difficult, because, though everybody came, they were awkward and not accustomed to be amused. You may very easily get quite out of the habit of being happy, if you like. I got some of the elder girls from the school, with Miss Billingsworth's permission, to act a little comedy, which the girls played with a great deal of spirit. This made everybody laugh; I really do think that some of those poor girls had not laughed for years. Then we had some singing; and then, though there were no young men, we cleared the room and danced, and Sir Charles said it reminded him of the famous Calico Ball he gave at the Mansion House in the year when he was Lord Mayor. Then there was a little supper, and claret cup, and they all went away well pleased.

That was the beginning of my evenings, and in this way we introduced society into the village.

They only wanted somebody to start them. Once started we went on easily. Every week we invented something for the evening's entertainment, and on every occasion we ended with a dance.

Then my father's wise sentence proved true. We did not find the love-making, which was found by the girls for themselves. For they brought young men from far-off places, such as Chigwell, Loughton, and Buckhurst Hill. It appeared that there are everywhere quantities, really large numbers, of young men who are always ardently desirous of a dance, and respond with the greatest alacrity to the chance of getting one every week, summer and winter. Naturally, therefore, flirtations began, and though the peace of the village vanished, the anxieties and flutterings, the whisperings and confidences, the anticipations of the evening, and the pleasure of wearing one's best frock, being in one's sweetest temper, and, better still, living in that delightful sun-lit haze which precedes an engagement—all these things together fully compensated. Besides

the peace of the village had been only a monotonous and sluggish calm, like the smooth surface of a duck-pond, which the girls regretted not.

In this creation of a *salon*, in receiving and reading the letters from Will and Allen, in visits to London, where we saw all the best pieces at the theatre and all the pictures, and in reading and music, the weeks passed swiftly away. At the end of the first year we were in our new house, the richest people in the village ; at the end of our second year Allen had already struck the vein by which he has won recognition, and Olinthus was at the height of his success. It was in the beginning of the third year that my father took me for the first time to France. It was a delightful time, if only the boys had been with us ; but I could not at all feel as if I was French by birth. We stopped a day or two in Paris, and I saw the spot where the shop had stood which supplied the barricade with my father's poems. Oh, those unlucky poems ! There had been the long period of the Second Empire since then, and another Revolution ; but my father folded his arms as he stood upon the sacred place, and was once more in imagination Philipon of the Barricades—Philipon, the Poet of Revolution. He is the kindest-hearted man in the world, and the most forgiving. Yet I am sure that at the moment the fierce desire of battle was upon him, and he felt that strange joy of the fight which we women read about but cannot understand.

Then we took the train and went to Orleans, and from Orleans to Tours, where we stayed, and whence we wandered about in the pleasant country of Touraine—why were the dear old provinces ever turned into departments ? We saw Chambord and Chenonceux, Loches and Amboise, Chinon and Saumur, Azay le Rideau, and Blois. We went on to Poitiers and to Angoulême, where one could dream away a life on the terrace overlooking the sweet and sunny plains, and to La Rochelle, the strange old town with the stone arcades in the streets and the shields of the Huguenot gentlemen. We were three months on our holiday—the first I had ever had. I learned, at least, to understand one reason why a Frenchman loves his country.

Then we returned, when the autumn colouring was on the Forest, and the sad, rainy English summer, which promises so much and gives so little, was over.

Allen had spent his summer at Richmond with Gertrude and Isabel, writing stories and poems, and getting daily better known ; Will had done something, the nature of which I do not know, which greatly pleased his seniors ; and Olinthus was simply dazzling. I forgot, because it is a little detail which really does not matter, and is not a part of the story, that several of the young men who came to my evenings made the mistake of falling in love with me, and I had the very disagree-

able duty of advising them to think about it no longer. I dare say they are cured by this time: but one or two of them, I remember, gave me a great deal of trouble.

Then the autumn slowly passed away, and when Christmas came and the new year, there remained less than six months to the time when I must make my decision. It is the story of that six months which I have to tell.

CHAPTER II.

HIS FIRST BOOK.

ALLEN'S first book of collected tales appeared in February of that year.

Nothing that a writer ever does seems to me quite to come up to his earliest and freshest work. Yet one could see that his touch was becoming firmer, the grasp of his art stronger, and his powers more developed. As yet, he confined himself wisely to short studies. They were not sketches at all, but careful and finished pictures. Some of these stories were sad, some humorous, some satirical; but they were all, one felt, true. Like all true stories, they suggested things which were not in the pages. They reminded me of what Allen once said about the theatre.

'The actors on the stage, if you can forget their acting and see only the story, tell a hundred tales besides the one which they represent. The study of Mercutio is a tragedy in itself. The story of Tybalt is as touching as the story of Romeo. What of Romeo's first mistress? Do you not think that she, too, sometimes came to weep over the grave of the lover who had been faithless to her, but whom she loved still, remembering the days when he sat at her feet and played with her golden tresses? Even the nurse and the apothecary and Friar Lawrence, especially the apothecary, could tell their tale.'

And thus he sketched the story of the apothecary. He was a student, Allen said, of Salerno, the great school for medicine: he went from Salerno to Montpellier, in order to attend the lectures on anatomy of Rabelais, the great anatomist and physician: he knew Servetus, that other great physician, and had talked with him. He was a poet and an enthusiast. But he failed, somehow. It was probably through lack of common-sense, a thing which has caused many to lag behind or go out of the way: and because he was too often running after the shadow instead of picking up the substance; for instance, he used to read books on alchemy, and sought the Great Projection; he wrote poetry which nobody read; he dangled after patrons who neglected him and gave him nothing;

finally, he became a lean and hungry seller of drugs and misanthropic. As for poisons, he would gladly have poisoned the whole of mankind, could he, by a potent draught, have made an end of all. He went on to sketch the end of that apothecary's career: how he hit upon a cosmetic which all the ladies of Verona rushed to buy: how he grew rich and sleek, forgot his old misanthropy, married the daughter of a wealthy merchant, burned his poetry, put his books on alchemy into the hands of the Inquisition, said nothing at all about that little transaction with Romeo, and, when he died, left money—to the disgust of his heirs—for the erection of the most beautiful tomb, all jasper, a miracle of marble, with a lovely little chapel, to be placed over the bodies of the unfortunate lovers. Thus, no one but Shakespeare knowing his history, he showed, in the end, his repentance. I always thought of this story when I read one of Allen's, because he had the art of finding materials for a human comedy where most people would see nothing at all but a squalid street with mean houses and cabbage-stalks. He was like a child who can play with two bits of stick and pretend everything. His work was a collection of all his stories. It was published in two volumes first, though now you can get it much more cheaply in one. He sent me a copy, but I had read the contents already in the magazines. Yet I read them again.

Then Allen sent me the criticisms. How hard and unappreciative they seemed to me! but then I could read between the lines, and I saw Allen's soul in the book, and that he had put into it his noblest and best. Yet I believe they were really kind and helped the book greatly. One or two spoke slightingly of the new writer. I was indignant. The men who wrote such things were unworthy, I thought, of the name of critic.

Isabel afterwards told me all about the reviews and the reviewers. She knew the names of the writers, even the unsigned reviews. This one, she told me, was the work of a man born to be a critic; not an unkind or harsh critic, but a just man, though sometimes hard in his judgments. Another was the work of an unsympathetic and unimaginative writer, on whom the pearls of fancy were thrown away. Another was written by a well-known novelist, and this was the most generous of all. So it is pleasant to think that there is no envy among novelists. Another was written by a man who wrote a leading article every day of his life for a daily, and two every week for a weekly, and one article at least every month for a monthly, and one long paper every quarter for the 'Quarterly,' and brought out a book or two every year, and was suspected of being a London correspondent to a colonial paper: and yet found time to read novels and to review them. What a wonderful thing is the world of letters! Some day writers will insist on signing all their articles in newspapers and everywhere else. Then, at last, we shall see them take their right position in the

world. As for the notices in half-a-dozen lines, Isabel told me that it was absurd to look at them, or to consider them, because at a guinea or two for a column, who can afford to read the half-dozen books with which they have to fill up that column? Yet an injury may be done to a writer even in half-a-dozen lines.

'You are proud of him, then, Claire?' said my father, as I stood with the book in my hands.

'Yes—but——'

'The drop of bitterness which is in everything. What is it, Claire?'

'I should like the book better if he had not told us—if I thought that he loved his character.'

'The girl told him her story and went away, and he remembered her no more.'

'He makes us love her so much that we feel we ought to love her still.'

'There was an artist once,' said my father, 'who tortured a slave in order to paint the agony. Do you think he felt those pains himself?'

'No—but yet— And he was a Wretch!'

'Many artists paint beautiful women. Do they love them all? My child, be reasonable. Our boy is an artist—only an artist,' he sighed, 'who might have been a Luther.'

Allen wrote so truthfully and so tenderly that we ought to have been satisfied. Yet—I suppose because my father had talked so much about it—it seemed to me a smaller thing to set forth the life of the people than to study it, and to learn what they want to make them happier. Yet it was a beautiful thing that he had done. The volume, daintily bound, stood before me in mute reproach. When I opened it, the pages reproached me still more. It was Allen himself who seemed to say, 'Claire! did you believe that I could do this—even when you encouraged me most? Are you not proud of me? Did you think your old playfellow would ever write so well? If I move your heart and compel your tears, and force you to love these puppets of my brain as if they were living creatures—more, because if they were living, you, with your small imagination, would see only common working girls and working men, and you would not love them at all;—if I have this mastery, will you still look for more, and waste regrets upon an idle dream?' It was ungrateful: and yet the thought possessed me that there was something nobler in my father's dream. It is very good to write of men and women truthfully, and with love and compassion; but, perhaps, better to work for them. One thinks more of the poor soldiers who rush into the fight than of the piper who keeps up their spirits.

'I have not yet,' said Allen, 'sent my mother a copy. Gertrude is going to take one. Will you, too, dear Claire, be

with my mother when Gertrude calls? I cannot tell you how much I want you to know Gertrude and to love her.'

The house occupied by Mrs. Engledew was one of the smallest in the village; a house of white boards with a porch covered over with honeysuckle and jessamine. There was a flower-garden in front, yet with few flowers. Outside, the house was clean and trim as becomes the house of a widow lady; within, its silence and sadness fell into one's heart. You wished to whisper—to laugh would have been wicked—the very furniture seemed to have caught the sadness of the poor woman, who had no hope left at all, since her son had left the City. I used to take her all the things that Allen wrote—but she read none of them. As for his papers on French literature, they might please some, she said, but she did not want to know about foreigners; and when the stories began and I tried to interest her in them, she said that there was quite enough misery in the world without inventing more; and as for making people laugh, Allen was not brought up to become a Tomfool at a fair, but to make money in a proper and becoming manner in the City. It was wonderful that a woman could be so fixed in her ideas.

I think that when she was young she must have been beautiful; one afternoon in summer when I called I found her sleeping in her chair—her head lay back and the reflection of the sunlight fell upon her cheeks from the open window. I stood looking at the face on which I had never seen sunshine before, and I understood how the thin cheek and wasted features might have looked when, four-and-twenty years before, she was a young and beautiful bride. Four-and-twenty years ago! and for three-and-twenty of them she had been a widow, with the dreadful recollection of a ruined husband, bidding her go home, kissing her for the last time and then . . . . then . . . . the suicide. And after that the long struggle with poverty, made tolerable only by her hopes—poor woman!—of the boy who would redeem the family honour.

I went to see her on the day of the visit, thinking I would prepare her mind. I told her how Allen's tales were now collected into a volume, which was so well received that it seemed as if his future was assured.

She heard me coldly. She seemed to take no kind of interest in the subject.

'As for the boy's future,' she said, 'that cannot be assured by writing books. I am glad to hear that he is not starving. It is not the life for which he was brought up, and I can never think of it without disappointment.'

'Oh!' I said; 'try to think of it with pride.'

'No. I cannot. I looked to see him winning good opinions in the City; he came of a business family; all his relations have always been in the City, none of them ever ran away to sea, or . . . . or anything. Why should he want to be anything different?

If he was in a line which leads to money I should not mind so much. But he is not.'

I told her next of the ladies who had been kind to Allen, and were coming to see her and bring her the book that very afternoon.

'They must come, I suppose, if they like,' she replied ungraciously, and then went on as if defending herself, 'I do not blame you, Claire; I blame nobody any more; not even your father, who encouraged Allen most. Because he is a foreigner, and cannot know the mischief he was doing when he filled the boy's head with nonsense.'

While we talked there was the sound of carriage wheels, and our visitors came. They were two ladies; one of them—I knew her at once—must be Gertrude—an old lady with white hair and the kindest face imaginable. With her was a young lady—who could the young lady be? Then I suddenly remembered that Allen had never told me what Isabel was like. Could Isabel be young? Could this be Isabel? It must be—it could be no other; and instantly I felt the truth. This beautiful girl, with the indefinable *cachet* of London, beautifully dressed, was the reader of Allen's poems; she it was who rowed with him, walked with him, talked with him, encouraged him; of whom he spoke and thought continually. Should I not be more than woman if a pang of jealousy had not caught my heart and held it still for a moment?

The elder lady—Gertrude—it was who spoke.

'I am a friend of your son's, Mrs. Engledew'—the widow bowed stiffly—'I am a great friend of his. I love him as if he were my own son. Is that a sufficient excuse for my calling upon you?'

She held out her hand, which Mrs. Engledew took coldly.

'My son,' she said, 'has made many friends in his new profession whom I do not know. Will you take a chair?'

We sat down, the widow in her arm-chair beside the fire. Do you know how, in very quiet houses, the fire is always dull, never goes out, never flames or cracks or burns cheerfully? That was the kind of fire that Mrs. Engledew always had. I sat behind her. The two ladies sat on the opposite side, and I became conscious that the younger one was looking more curiously at me than at Mrs. Engledew.

'You do not know my name, perhaps?'

'Claire—Miss Philipon—this young lady—has told me you were coming.'

'Thank you, Miss Philipon,' said Gertrude. 'I made Allen's acquaintance nearly two years ago. He is so bright and clever, so certain of distinction, that it has been the greatest joy to me, I assure you, to know him.' She paused, and looked for some word or smile of response, but there was none. 'I have never before known a young man with so much promise.'

'Oh!' I said, taking the widow's hand, 'does it not make you proud to hear this?'

'When my son,' she replied, 'was in the City, he showed so much promise that they offered him a post of the greatest responsibility in China. This would have led to a partnership in one of the best houses. Yes, he is a boy of great promise, which makes my disappointment the worse.'

'But, my dear lady,' Gertrude continued, 'it must be pride and thankfulness, not disappointment, that you should feel. He may become—he *shall* become—one of the best writers of his age. You could not pray for a better son.'

'He should have become one of the leading merchants in London; a grave and serious man, with a character. Not a play actor, to make the people laugh and cry.'

Gertrude sighed.

'I have brought you his book; we have had it bound for you. See! Allen has written in it:—"For my mother. The first copy of my first book."' Mrs. Engledew received it passively. 'We brought it ourselves, in order to tell you what he cannot, how good and clever it is, and how much it is already praised.'

'I do not read what is called light literature,' the mother said. 'I am no longer young. I think of my soul, and my husband in heaven, where I wish to join him. I have no desire to laugh. There are sorrows enough of my own to cry over. Tell Allen, if you please, that I thank him for his book. Claire has tried to read me some of his things, but they do not interest me. The boy's business in life was in Silk, not in story telling; he had excellent chances in Silk; he has thrown them away in order to write stories. He will never make any money now. Do not ask me to read his foolish books.'

'My dear lady,' Gertrude pleaded, 'it is not, believe me, a question of money. Yet your son will make an income which will enable him to live comfortably. Do not doubt it.'

'I think of what he has thrown away,' said his mother.

'Think rather of what your son has gained. Oh! Mrs. Engledew'—she leaned forward and took both of the cold reluctant hands—'such a writer as your son will be is a gift of God; he teaches while he touches the springs of tears and laughter; he shows the world what it is, and makes us discontented with ourselves. Can you doubt that it is better to be such a teacher than only one who buys and sells?'

I felt myself guilty while this enthusiast for literature pleaded Allen's cause. Yes; it was not only a story that he would tell, but lessons, exhortations, example, admonitions that each reader might draw from his page. Only a story teller! Only an artist! Why, how ignorant was I even in thought, to underrate the power of Art!

Mrs. Engledew replied, unmoved by this appeal, that as for

teaching, there were schoolmasters for the young and clergymen for the grown up. Allen was neither a schoolmaster nor a clergyman.

'But your son will be loved by everybody,' said Gertrude.

'His father did not want to be loved by everybody; nor his grandfather, who was also in Silk. They desired to do their duty, have the approval of their conscience, to increase their credit and their balance, and to find safe investments. What more should a man desire? As for people's love, I do not see why a serious man should care whether he is loved or not.'

This was very discouraging, and presently, after a few more vain attempts to make the poor frozen woman understand, Gertrude rose.

'You will not read Allen's book, perhaps,' she said. 'Yet it will remain here for you to look at. It will remind you that he is a man now who has done something already, and will do a great deal more. You will begin to feel differently about his work.'

'Never,' said the mother, bitterly. 'His work is not his father's work. His friends are not his father's friends. If he gets talked about in all the papers, which you call getting honour, I shall feel no pride in him; not any. I should have been proud of him had he never been mentioned in any paper at all, but had risen in the City, and become a partner in his House. But now—never!'

So Gertrude said no more, but left her. I went with them.

'My dear,' she said outside, 'Allen told me you would be here. I know all about you. You are Claire,' she repeated, taking both my hands in hers, 'take us to your house. Let us call upon you. Allen has told you about us, I know. Isabel wants to know you as much as I do.'

It *was* Isabel, then. But, of course, I knew it could be no other. And how stupid I was! How could I have gone on thinking that Isabel was not young? My little jealousy had nearly vanished by that time, and I could think to myself how good and true she looked, and worthy to be loved by such a man as Allen; while, as for myself—oh! it was only schoolboy and schoolgirl. Of course, Allen could never think of me beside this girl, whom I knew already so well, because he had told me so much. We shook hands and became friends at once—and if one was unworthy and jealous, she felt ashamed of her meanness, when the other two were thinking, not of themselves at all, but of the boy whom all three loved. They came with me, and I showed them all the treasures of the bygone time of which they wanted to know so much. There were the photographs of the two boys when they were fourteen. 'Oh, look!' said Isabel, 'at Allen's great eager eyes'—and when they were eighteen and when they were twenty-one, just before they went away. There were Allen's first verses—I gave some to Gertrude. There were

Will's drawings; there were the books we used to read in, the Lamartine and Châteaubriand, the Montaigne, the old Plutarch, in Amyot's French, Béranger, one or two of Victor Hugo's novels, Molière, and Racine, Boileau, and our English Milton, Shakespeare, and Pope. There was Allen's own copy of Keats, which he gave me when he went away, because he loved it so much. Then there were the presents which Will had sent me from China, and the drawings of the people and the places which he made for me, and his letters. I showed them all the things belonging to the boys, kept with the shabby old furniture of the dear old room.

'When the summer comes,' I said, 'I will show you the Forest. Come with Allen. We will walk where we used to play together under the trees and among the hawthorns. I have no heart to go there by myself.'

'My dear,' said Gertrude, 'it is a truly beautiful thing for a girl to have the love of two such men. I say so, who never had the love of one.'

Her eyes glistened. One could not choose but kiss her.

'It is an idyl,' she said. 'It is like Paul and Virginia, but Virginia remains behind.'

'And it is Paul who goes away into a far country,' said Isabel; and afterwards I wondered if she quite knew what her words might mean.

CHAPTER III.

OLINTHUS.

I SUPPOSE that it must have been early in this year that Mr. Massey and Mr. Skantlebury yielded to temptation, and went up to town to make money in the easy way which Olinthus had adopted. Mr. Colliber had been gone nearly two years; he began to go regularly to London about the time when Olinthus had entered upon his career of greatness. First he went in the morning and returned at night; then he went on Monday morning and returned on Friday evening. The little party which met daily on the Green was then reduced to three. Now Sir Charles alone was left. My father, for his part, seldom joined a parliament which talked of things whereof he was profoundly ignorant.

One morning in March I was crossing the Green and passed Sir Charles, who looked so lonely that I stopped to talk with him. Where, I asked him, were his friends?

'They are gone to town,' he replied gloomily. 'They are gone to make their fortunes.—Ho!'

I begged him to explain.

'Colliber,' he said, 'has left us a long time. I don't know

where he is, and Massey tells me that he isn't seen about the City. But he is doing something, Colliber is. He is pulling strings in a corner, I expect, and raking in the money. I knew he would go back to it. Men like him can't keep away. Then, you see, none of us except Massey, who doesn't care, like to be seen much in the City; so that Colliber keeps in the background. There are always, my dear young lady, disagreeable people in the world who won't take the right view of—of the pluck and enterprise which led to their losing money. I was myself, you know, so full of enterprise that I lost an immense sum of money—other people's money it was chiefly.'

'Yes, Sir Charles.' I was afraid he would go on to dilate on the glory of his failure.

'So,' he went on, 'none of us can very well walk about the City. Now Colliber's case is worse than mine, because he too let in so many—I mean lost so much more money. He is pulling the strings—I know he is pulling the strings somewhere. He is up to devilry. There was always something unnatural in a man who failed for so much and took so little pride in it. But as for Massey and Skantlebury, especially Skantlebury, I *must* say——'

Nothing in the language means more than this little phrase, 'I must say,' unless, perhaps, it is the corresponding expression, 'I do think.' It is, in itself, an interjection, meaning quantities of things.

'What have they done, then?'

'They have gone off, my dear young lady, actually gone off, at their time of life, to speculate in Stocks. Massey has got nothing at all to lose, because what little there is was settled on his wife. Skantlebury has got about twelve thousand pounds. He says that when he has doubled it he will rest content. Ho, ho! And they've gone—being as ignorant as mice about the ways of Capel Court—they've gone in a mean and sneakin' manner to young Gallaway.'

'Gone to Olinthus?'

'They've gone to young Gallaway. There's a man for you! For that matter, Claire, I hope he is for you. Bless you, my dear! I know all about the three lovers. Will Massey is the best set up, but he is in China. Young Engledew may be clever with books, but he is only a literary scrub after all; and his stories, which I have tried to read, are, I must say, desperately low. Whereas, with Olinthus Gallaway, you will be a happy woman if money can make you happy. And a good-looking young fellow, too, though a little coarse in the gills, from too much champagne. You will cure him of that, my dear and any other faults he may now possess. He has champagne for lunch and champagne for dinner; and on Sundays, I am told, he does not go to church, which is wrong, but has champagne for breakfast. Well, youth must sow wild oats;

and he makes a splendid income ; and no one, not even Colliber in his best days, ever had such a head for finance. With him, my dear, you will be happy.'

'Thank you, Sir Charles. And about Mr. Massey?'

'What Massey has done is this. He talked it over with Skantlebury, and they made up a little plot together. First one was to call on young Gallaway, and then the other. They would communicate to each other their information, and so double their gains. I didn't think Skantlebury had it in him. Well, they went up. First Massey went. Gallaway told him he had five minutes and no more, pulled out his watch and kept looking at it. Massey said that he was come as an old friend to ask a favour. "I never grant favours," said Gallaway. "To me you will," said Massey. "Why, I've known you since you were a boy. Come, Olinthus—I still say Olinthus for old times' sake, you know, but one ought to say Mr. Gallaway, or Lord Gallaway, or Duke Gallaway—hang it! to such a fellow as you." You know Massey's manner. If he'd got a hundred thousand to his name he couldn't be more so. Well, he bluffed young Gallaway out of a straight tip. He did, indeed. Gallaway just turned red—I don't know why—and whispered, "Will you promise not to tell Mr. Colliber? Sell Egyptians."'

'And did Mr. Massey sell Egyptians?'

'He did. He told Skantlebury ; they both sold Egyptians. And Egyptians turned up trumps. Very well then. It is Skantlebury's turn next. He goes humble—you know his way—and asked the favour, if so small a man as himself may ask a favour of Mr. Gallaway, who has always been as generous as he is brilliant. And it would be the making of him, it would. And so on. Well, he gets his favour, too. Oddly, too, on the same promise not to tell Colliber. Why shouldn't he tell Colliber? Professional jealousy, I say. Colliber was in the same line, and greatly distinguished himself, but not a patch on Gallaway.'

'Did Skantlebury, too, sell Egyptians?'

'I don't know what he bought or sold. But he told Massey, and they both made money. Massey made quite a sum, but Skantlebury is cautious. Massey talks of reviving his projects ; nothing short of millions will satisfy him. Well, we shall see ; meantime, my dear, it is very hard on me, in my old age, to lose all my companions—first the boys, though we saw little of them. Yet it was pleasant to watch them going off to town every morning—their future all before them—what was it to be? The City is a wonderful place : there's a fortune for everybody who will work, and a splendid failure in store for the most lucky. Dear me! and then Colliber went. Colliber is short in his temper, and he's got a sharp tongue, but we missed him very much. He never seemed to understand his own greatness ; he wasn't proud of his failure. I think he would rather

not have failed at all. But Colliber was full of information. Well, he must needs go to the City—he knows why,' the garrulous old man went on talking. 'Then Massey and Skantlebury went. Massey is a concerned sort of a man, but he failed well; and he has ideas, though he is wanting in the respect due to rank and position. Skantlebury is a great loss to me; a most obliging creature, and deferential to his betters. I miss Skantlebury greatly.'

'Do they go every day to London?'

'Every day. They can't keep away. When men go off in that line they must always be in the City. I knew a man once, a clergyman he was, who used to speculate on the changes every hour, and stood at the window to see that his broker ran. Walking was too slow for him. Massey and Skantlebury go every day too; they sit and watch; they sneak one after the other to young Gallaway, and sometimes he swears at them, and sometimes he whispers a word. It is a gambling game, and it will end badly. It is tossing for sovereigns. It is a game which a respectable man like Skantlebury, who knows what saving means, ought not to take up. A bad business, my dear, a bad business.'

I saw Olinthus very seldom. He came, however, one Saturday afternoon early in the spring of that year. He had only come to see me, he said; his mother and the girls could wait. I observed that he was looking ill at ease; his cheeks were flabby and pale; his eyes were red; his face was gloomy. I asked him what was the matter.

'Nothing that you can do any good for,' he replied roughly, but not rudely.

I asked no more, and he went on sucking the knob of his stick moodily.

'I did think, Claire,' he presently remarked, 'that I should have some sympathy from you at least. You see I am down in the mouth, and yet you don't even ask me why.'

'I did ask you, but you refused to tell me.'

'I *can't* tell you, Claire,' he groaned. 'That is what makes me low. If I could tell you—if I could tell anybody—I should be better. But I can't. I can only wait till I am in my own rooms, and then swear at him.'

'If you want to tell me about it in order to swear at him—whoever he may be—I would rather you did not tell me anything.'

'I can't tell you anything,' he repeated. 'I am like a man in a prison. Ah! you think it is all skittles, I suppose. Much you know! Look here, Claire,' he said with a sudden burst. 'I lead the life of a dog, I do, and dare n't bite, because, if I did——' Here he stopped suddenly, and turned ghastly pale. We were standing in the garden, and just then Mr. Colliber passed slowly by. He looked round, raised his hat to me, and nodded to Olinthus.

'What is the matter, Olinthus?' I asked, for he was quite white, and trembling. I thought he would faint.

'Nothing,' he replied, 'nothing at all. Do you think,' he whispered, 'do you think, Claire, that he heard me when I said—when I said—that I led the life of a dog?'

'Mr. Colliber? No, I should think not.'

'I don't want him to hear such words as these. He might—he might—put some wrong construction on them, you know. In the City credit is everything—yes, everything.'

'Your great fortune does not seem to bring you happiness,' I said.

'No, not yet; but it will. I say to myself that when you consent——'

'Olinthus!'

'Well, then, if you consent—you know—I can then tell you everything, and it will be easier to bear. It's the dreadful loneliness of the thing that preys upon me. Other men can talk to each other; I've got to shut up as tight as wax. Other men can drink and be jolly; I've got to keep sober, except in my own chambers and by myself. Oh! it's dreadful. But the money comes in—yes, the money keeps coming in. Perhaps some day there will be the enjoyment of it.'

'And how is the Countess?' I asked.

'There again. Oh, Claire! I've been most cruelly deceived by the Countess. I thought she wanted my society; she only wanted my tips after all. I gave her one or two, and she plunged and made a little pile; and then she went on without me, and lost it all. Then she came to me again, and asked for more, but I couldn't give her any more. I dared not. If was as much as my berth—I mean—well—I couldn't—that's flat—and I told her so. And then she went on her knees—she did indeed. I never thought to have a Countess on her knees to me. But I couldn't do it; I'd been warned not to; and I refused. When she found that crying did no good she sprang up in a rage—you never saw a real Countess in a rage; Claire, it's truly awful—she boxed my ears, she did indeed—who would have thought I should live to have my ears boxed by a Countess?—and called me a contemptible City cad—but of course her ladyship could say what she liked, and words don't break bones—and said her brother-in-law, the Honourable James, should come to the office with a horsewhip and cowhide me; and then she flung out of the office, and left word among the clerks that they had better not go away early, because a gentleman was coming with a cowhide for the contemptible cad within—meaning me. They grinned—the clerks. Hang 'em! I pay them their salaries and don't order them about half so much as I am—never mind—and yet they grinned. I wish I had given them all the sack there and then.'

'And has the Honourable James called?'

'No; I sent him a letter. You see, Claire, when a Countess boxes your ears you can only grin and bear it. But as for her brother, whether he is an Honourable or not, if he comes with a horsewhip you can meet him with another. So I wrote to him and tossed the letter into the basket open for the clerks to read it. I told him first that he owed me seventy-five pounds, and I should be obliged by a cheque at once. Next, I was informed by his sister-in-law, the Countess, that he was going to cowhide me. I was going to lay in a guttapercha cane and a bludgeon, and was ready to accommodate him with either. He didn't call, and he hasn't sent that cheque.'

'It seems to me, then, that you have got rid of a very bad set of people.'

'And to think of the money they've won of me! Night after night it was baccarat, euchre, nap, écarté, poker, through the pack for sovereigns—every kind of game. I knew her ladyship was a gambler, well enough. But then'—he sighed heavily—'she could be very charming to a fellow, Claire. She was the only woman who ever made me feel that I could forget you. She had a way of pleasing a man and looking at him. Ah! those eyes of hers!' He sighed heavily. 'Then there are those two old idiots, Massey and Skantlebury. They keep coming to me. Sometimes I send them away. But if one goes the other comes. As for Massey, he won't go. He sits down and crosses his legs and says he will wait as long as I like. But he won't go. They'll get me into an awful row one of these days. Why, if he should meet them this afternoon—any day—and they should tell him.'

Always this mysterious person in the background of whom he was so much afraid. However, he said it had cheered him to let me know how miserable he was, and he presently went away. One thought of the copy-book moral maxims, and reflected that riches will not always make a man happy.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR ALLEN'S SAKE.

When Gertrude—you must now let me speak of her by her Christian name—asked me, a few days later, to pay her a visit, I took it as another act of kindness to Allen, and accepted with the anticipation of going into a world quite new to me. If, however, it had been intended to confer a kindness on myself rather than on Allen, I could not have met with a more cordial welcome.

'Above all, my dear,' said Gertrude, 'call me by my Christian name. Let me still feel young—among the young;

and recall my youth among the old. Nothing helps so much as to retain your Christian name. And now, my dear, how shall we amuse you?'

'We can get a box for any theatre you would like to see,' said Isabel, 'or tickets for any concert; and there are a few galleries open, and there are always the streets if the weather is fine.'

'I like the streets best,' I said. 'But, indeed, I do not want amusement. Let me watch your kind of life and learn why Allen loves it so much.'

It was easy to understand that, at any rate. After such a youth as the poor boy had passed, which made him loathe the name of money, he would love any kind of life which seemed free from the desire of making money or the fear of losing it, or the irksomeness of not having enough. The very last topic of conversation with Gertrude would be that of money. And then Gertrude's was a life spent among books and the talk was about books: and it was a life with many sides and sympathies, and keen for culture of many kinds. In this house Allen met with the appreciation and encouragement which I could not give him, because I never understood that worship of form and expression which to some makes a poem beautiful and delightful though it contains not a single new thought or a happy idea.

The first evening was Gertrude's evening at home. The rooms were very full, and most of the guests were men and women of some distinction, however small. It was exactly what Allen told me; all of them could do something; in the talk and instruction and discussions of the day they all took some part. What a difference—oh! what a great gulf between the world of Art and Letters, with its cleverness and brightness and apparent sinking of selfish interest, and the world of the City.

'Allen,' I whispered, 'can you picture to yourself Sir Charles set down in this drawing-room?'

'And his consternation when no one recognised the greatness of his colossal failure? Think of the universal stare! Tell me, Claire, do you like it?'

'It interests me very much. It seems so bright and clever. Oh! Allen, this is indeed better for you than the City.'

He answered with his quick bright smile.

They all seemed to know each other and talked freely, and they all knew what was going on and what everybody was doing. Some of the ladies were dressed in æsthetic extravagances—I thank heaven, sometimes, that I am half a Parisienne—but many were dressed quite poorly, because, as I learned afterwards, the following of Art in its various branches is not always lucrative, and many of Gertrude's friends have to continue in poverty all their lives. As for the men, they were mostly middle-aged or old men who had done their work and made their mark. If you listened to them you would hear them

talking of Lady Blessington and Disraeli and the Count D'Orsay and Lord Palmerston, when he was still a gay young fellow of sixty, and Taglioni and Madame Celeste and other people who flourished in the theatres and the forties. I think it is delightful to get old people who can talk and who have played a part in the things we read about, especially in the impossible time, the time just before one was born. When we were in France we went to see a certain Marquis of the ancient time, who had been a page in Napoleon's court. I expected to find a man who would remind me of Béranger. I found an old old gentleman sitting beside a stream fishing for gudgeon, and he could remember nothing at all. As for young men, the promise of the future was represented only by Allen and one or two others.

All the girls, for their part, seemed ready to contribute something to make the evening pleasant. I suppose there were some among them who only had the ordinary accomplishments, but those who performed for us exhibited a skill which was very far indeed beyond the amateur displays which one heard at my evenings, when some of us, including myself, could play prettily. For instance, there was one young lady of eighteen who played the violin in a duet with her sister. What would they think in the village of a girl playing the violin? It would be considered 'unladylike.' Yet she played very beautifully, and looked as graceful as the Muse of Music. And another played the zither (which I at once resolved to learn), while two more sang a Tyrolean song. And another played a brilliant piece on the piano, and another sang a most difficult song, with a sweet voice and highly trained. Whatever they did was done well. At my evenings everything was done only tolerably. It was as if they had resolved on the masterv of the art, not the mere acquisition of an accomplishment. The violinist, for instance, presently told me, that it was her one occupation and the work of her life, so far, to play the violin well. There was a portfolio of drawings—finished, beautiful drawings—lying on the table. They were the fruits of a journey made by a young lady present. This, too, was the chosen work of her life. I am quite sure that there used to be and still remains in some circles, a kind of prejudice that to do a thing well is below the dignity of a 'lady,' and savours of the 'professional.' But here, those who were not professional wished to be; and I am quite sure that the lady who played the violin, the lady who painted the water-colour sketches, and the lady who sang, would have liked nothing better than a public exhibition. Why not? 'Art should belong to all,' said Gertrude; 'it is treason to your genius to keep things hidden.'

It pleased me to observe how everybody knew and seemed to like Allen, and how my dear, shy, sensitive boy had developed into a young man who bore himself with confidence if not with

assurance, and could hold his own with any, and was accepted as a man who was sure to rise.

'I am going to recite presently,' Isabel whispered to me. 'I always do, you know. It is my one poor talent. I cannot sing, nor can I write, nor paint; but I can recite. I have taken one of Allen's poems, which I hope will please you. But first I want you to sing.'

'Indeed,' I replied, 'I would rather not.'

'Allen tells me you have got the sweetest voice in the world and the most beautiful collection of French songs. Do sing one for us, only one.'

Perhaps the sweetness and novelty of the old French melody would make the people forget the want of training in the singer. I sang then, to my own accompaniment, because I could not stand up before everybody with the music in my hand, first one and then another of my French songs. One of them was set to an air taken by Clement Marot, when he translated the Psalms. I have heard it sung in the Protestant Temple at La Rochelle: it is a strange, unexpected air, with a sad yearning in it, which suggests thoughts and brings tears to your eyes. Will always loved it, and Allen used to walk about the room when I sang it, silent, dreaming, his eyes far off. I sang it to-night to please him. Happily, it pleased everybody.

'Claire,' said Allen, 'your voice was never sweeter, and you never sang that song better.'

Amid the talk of the room I heard a voice, it was Gertrude's, saying—'And for once, believe me, nothing to do with literature or art at all. Yes; she is, indeed, very beautiful and sweet.'

Was she talking about me? Well; it is very pleasant to think that people call one beautiful and sweet. Yet it was all for Allen's sake.

Then Isabel stood up to recite. Surely the power of acting is a most wonderful gift. Isabel could act so well that we forgot a lovely and graceful girl was standing before us—at least, I did. I thought only of the words she uttered and the characters she assumed. As she stood before us, her slight figure swayed gently as if in rhythm with the verse; her hands were sometimes clasped and still, but sometimes lifted with quick, sharp gesture; her clear hazel eyes gazed through us and beyond us, as if she was, indeed, inspired, and saw nothing but the scenes of which she spoke, heard nothing but the words of the poem. She endowed the verse with an intensity of meaning, a fulness of purpose, a directness which I, who thought I knew all Allen's poetry so well, had never even suspected or felt.

When she finished there was again a murmur of applause, and the talk began again. And again I heard a voice—this time not Gertrude's, but the voice of a girl sitting beside me.

'Whose poem is it? Whose should it be? Of whom does Isbael think all day except of him?'

Yes. I had seen it already: in her eyes when they rested upon him; in her voice when she spoke to him; in the brightening of her colour when he approached her; in the jealous, inquiring glance when she looked at him; in the very attentions which she lavished upon me, who had robbed her, she thought, of Allen's heart. Poor Isabel! Yet, who could live with Allen so much and not love him? Of course she loved him.

Sometimes I think, considering how many men have to wait till they are far on in their thirties before they marry, whether the women who were young with them, and must have loved them, ever forget them. Could I, for instance, ever forget Will and Allen, even if the time had gone by and they could not offer to marry me, and I had accepted—if that were possible—another man? I think there must always, where there is a man who marries at thirty or later, be some woman—perhaps more than one—who loved him in his youth, when as yet he had all the world before him, and was unformed, and will never forget him as he was then—young, ardent, full of life and laughter and belief in the world, and love and hope. I shall always remember Allen as he was in those days: and *so will Isabel.*

'You know those verses, my dear?' asked Gertrude.

'I thought I knew them well,' I said, 'but now I see very clearly that I did not know them at all.'

'There is no test,' she said, 'of good work so certain as the test of reading aloud or reciting. Always read your verses aloud, my dear. But I forget. You do not write. Oh! what a pity! I should like everybody whom I know to write. Let me tell Isabel what you have said.'

'It is quite true,' said Allen, who had joined us. 'Isabel has given the words stronger life and more reality than I could put into them. She knows that I can never thank her enough.'

Isabel smiled, and said that she was glad to interpret Allen's verses for me.

Then Gertrude, between the talk around her, began to speak of Allen.

'He is sure to succeed,' she said. 'He will become famous, if you care for fame; but of course you do.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'I suppose every woman must desire honour for her friends.'

'And he will do good work, lasting work. Is not that better still? My dear, tell me, do you think we have improved Allen for you?'

This assumption that it was all for me—the fame, and the good work, and the change in Allen—vexed me. Why should it be assumed that——one does not like to finish the question even in thought.

'You must not say for me,' I whispered low. 'And besides,

if it were for me, would it not be too much? What could I give him in return for so much?'

'You will give him what you have always given him—sympathy and encouragement, and—and love, my dear. He will want no more. Besides, you give him your beauty. Do not undervalue woman's most precious gift.'

'Gertrude, look at Allen, now.'—Allen and Isabel were talking together earnestly. 'Can I—tell me—can I give him more than Isabel can give him? Can I give him half so much? Her beauty is better than mine, and she knows—what I do not—what he wants.'

'My dear, my dear,' she laid her hand in mine. 'Do not say such things. You must not say them. Indeed you must not; do not think them, even. We have always thought of Allen as your own. Isabel can have no such thought, believe me.'

'Yet, if I were to put such a thought into her head——'

'And Allen has no such thought.'

'Perhaps not; yet.'

Gertrude's face was troubled. She looked again at Isabel. No thought as yet. Her sweet face calm and untroubled.

'Tell me, my dear,' she said, 'is—the other—Will—is he, too, clever?'

'Not clever, as you count cleverness. But others would call him full of cleverness. He is not a man of books but of active work.'

Then we were interrupted, because Allen brought his friend Lawrence to me, and our talk for that evening was stopped. Nor did Gertrude speak about it to me again for some time.

I found Mr. Lawrence Ouvry a very pleasant fellow, and quite as Allen had described him. He could not possibly be so wise as he looked, and beneath his thoughtful brow there dwelt a pair of eyes which seemed perpetually twinkling. He, too, began to talk about Allen, and seemed to regard him as already belonging to me. But one could not very well explain to a young man the exact situation. No one, among them all, I believe, conceived it possible that a mere country girl could refuse a man who had achieved literary distinction.

'We have done what we could for the illustrious poet and Maker,' said Lawrence. 'We have dragged him out of his solitude and made him go into the world. It was a recluse you sent to us, Miss Philipon, the hermit of Hainault. Have you preserved the original hermitage?'

'All Allen's friends ought to be very grateful to you, Mr. Ouvry.'

'Well; it is not every day that we get such a chance as a man with the real ring. Anybody can write; that is nothing—the current literature of the next generation will, I am quite certain, be written by the Board School boy—but only a few can write as Engledew writes.'

'You write too, he tells me. Scientific papers—and—and——'

Here I laughed, because his eyes began to twinkle.

'You mean to say,' he whispered, 'that he has betrayed me!'

'Yes. He has told me all. I know your secret. But I will not reveal it.'

'The malady is hereditary,' he said. 'Sons take after their mothers. My mother wrote novels. That is the reason why I write—scientific papers.'

Then he began to tell me how he met Allen at a restaurant and how he began to talk with him, and how—well, I knew it all, but it was pleasant to be told it over again.

It seemed as if a great many people wanted to be introduced to me that evening. Could they all know that I was such an old friend of Allen? That was impossible.

'My dear,' said Gertrude to me next day, 'do you not think that the *beaux yeux* had something to do with it? As if the men—selfish creatures—were thinking about Allen!'

Somehow it had not occurred to me that men of letters and art should bestow a thought upon the face of a strange girl.

'It is strange, is it not!' said Gertrude. 'But men are wonderful, my dear. At every age, every man is ready to leave the most important things, put by the most wonderful work, in order to talk with a pretty girl. And the more nonsense they find to talk, the better they like it. The only chance for them is to lock themselves up in a study.' And then she began to say kind things about my face and figure, I suppose, to console me for not being an artist.

The next day we went to some studios and saw unfinished pictures on the easels. As for the pictures one can say nothing. They are finished by this time and have been exhibited and bought, and are scattered over the whole world. The studios were charming, hung about with tapestry, bits of armour, trophies, weapons, brass things, old glass, mirrors, and all kinds of wonderful things. There were costumes lying about, and the artists seemed not at all disinclined to stop work and talk a little. As for the talk it was all about their work and their friends—artists seem to care for nothing else. One of them made a sketch of my head and face for me, and said it should be used for Helen of Troy—men talk nonsense, yet one likes these extravagancies. And always, everywhere, the same respect and deference shown to Gertrude, and the same *camaraderie* with Allen and Isabel.

One evening we went to the theatre and Lawrence Ouvry gave a little supper in his rooms after the performance. A young actor was one of the guests—we had seen him playing in the first piece. He had the most delightful manners, and kept us amused while he made me understand for the first time how

his profession, like every other, wants hard work and constant study, and is a very serious profession indeed.

It has got nothing whatever to do with the story—except that Lawrence Ouvry had been so extraordinarily good to Allen that one likes to talk about him—but I cannot forbear to mention with what respect he was spoken of by his cousin as a man who had departed from the traditions of his family and gone off in quite another direction, as a cold, hard man of science who had no sympathy with Art.

'My dear,' said Gertrude, 'in all the practical concerns of life, and in every question connected with science, the calm judgment of that balanced mind is invaluable to us all—we greatly depend upon Lawrence. Yet it is a most surprising thing that a scientific man should come from among us. I suppose that he has by this time made a great name in science. Have you heard, Isabel, of anything that he has done?'

'Lawrence told me,' she replied, 'about a year ago, that he was thinking of a paper on the Validation of the Higher Kinetics—I remember the title because I made him write it down. But I have heard no more of it.'

I stayed with them for three or four days. Allen came every day, and of one thing I became daily more certain. What that was I will tell you presently. We talked on two subjects only. When Allen was with us we talked of literature, and of men and women of letters. When he was not with us, we talked of him.

I found, as I already suspected, that Allen's views on the subject of his profession were greatly modified. He thought more highly of his art and less highly of its followers. But to him, as to his friends, there were no interests worth consideration except those of literature. It was a new world to me, and it seemed as if, art being only one form of work, too much importance was given to one kind of work. But it was a congenial atmosphere for Allen; though it developed in him a spirit of separation which might do harm to his work. The world for such a man exists in order to supply him with materials. Men and women do all kinds of things; they live, love, work, quarrel, fight, hope, suffer, die—without any regard it is true to artistic grouping, yet in order to provide subjects and models for the painter. It was pleasant to hear this old lady, so kind of heart, speak of people as if they were all lay figures and puppets for the artist.

Allen must never give up his acquaintance with the people; he must always go about among them and learn their manner of life. 'Remember that, my dear'—always as if the future of Allen lay in my hands—'mankind affords an inexhaustible study; you can find a picturesque bit of life in every street. I have always lamented that women cannot get about like men; if we had greater freedom in this respect we should show greater

breadth of treatment and more firmness of handling. If I were young I would go as nurse to the London Hospital for six months. Oh! what chances a nurse must have! Yet, my dear, I do not remember hearing of any nurse becoming a novelist. To be sure the profession of nursing is only thirty years old.'

'Do you not think the life a pleasant one, Claire?' Allen asked.

'It is very pleasant, Allen. And it suits you as no other life would. And you really think that your position is assured?'

'That I cannot say, but I hope so. What other hope have I? What other hope can I have? I am afraid to go on with the tales. Isabel wants me to undertake a three-volume novel; but I doubt my strength—yet—to write a good novel. And then, then—the Play!'

'Oh! The Play!'

'Gertrude does not know of it yet. We shall show it to her when it is finished.'

'You have arranged it with Isabel, I suppose.'

'Yes. Isabel knows all my plans—Isabel and you, Claire. Tell me if you like her.'

'She is a little reserved with me. But yet I like her. She is clever, is she not?'

'Yes; she is very clever.'

'And I am sure she is sympathetic.'

'Yes; she has been a great help to me. Claire, I cannot tell you what I owe to these two ladies.'

'Shall I tell you, Allen, how to repay their kindness?'

'That is impossible.'

'No; it is very possible. And I will show you the way, Allen, but not this morning.'

'I thought continually of Isabel and her secret; which she hardly knew herself. Allen filled so large a part of her thoughts and yet she did not know—I am sure she did not know—how much she thought about him. And if she considered me with curiosity and a little jealousy, it was only because she felt as if no one could be good enough for Allen.

'My dear,' said Gertrude, 'we grudge you our poet; not because you will not make him happy, but because a *grande passion* disturbs and hinders the current of his work. Allen has not yet caught that mysterious faculty which brings a man the best success—the love of the world. It is better, far better than success in a literary circle. We hope it for him. I am sure he will get it—some day. Strange quality! Many of the greatest artists have never arrived at it. What can we call it? I think it is *touch*.'

Then she began to talk about a poet's wife.

'She must,' said Gertrude, 'be content to become his

shadow. She must remember that every help she gives her husband is sympathy and apprehension. She must receive his first thoughts.'

'His first thoughts,' Isabel repeated. 'They are the best and most beautiful,'

'Yes,' Gertrude went on very seriously, 'the most beautiful because they are the first fresh conceptions, the very inspiration. His wife has, therefore, her reward, if she wants any. It ought to be reward enough to see the work growing with the fame and honour, and to know that he will live long after her life is gone. My dear! It is a great thing: it is the greatest thing for a woman. It is better than to be a poet one's self, because, in all woman's work in any art, there is none which touches the highest point. And there never will be.'

On the last morning of my stay, Isabel spoke more freely to me. Of course she began on Allen.

'I am glad,' she said, 'that you think him improved. We see him so often that we are not conscious of the change which you find in him.'

I said what I thought best to say about her own share in the work of improvement, and she blushed very prettily as she hastened to explain that Allen was like a brother, or a son of the house. 'And oh!' she said, 'I have wanted to say it ever since you came; but I dared not, until now.'

'What is it, Isabel?'

'I understand now why Allen loves you.'

'Are you quite sure that he does?'

'Of course he does. And I am glad, too, that you are rich, because now he will not have to trouble his mind about money.'

'But, Isabel—do you not know? Has he not told you all the story?'

'A gambler in stocks and shares: and a merchant in China:—and Allen,' she replied, with a little laugh of contempt at the contrast.

'Does Allen ever talk to you about the merchant in China? Ask him, Isabel, to tell you about Will.'

CHAPTER V.

FROM WILL.

And now the days lengthened apace; the first spring flowers were over, the primrose lingered yet in shady hedges, but the crocus and the daffodil were gone: the spring was ready to come upon us as soon as the east winds should cease to blow; already the lilac was in leaf and the blackthorn in flower, and

the hawthorn ready to follow, and the great buds of the horse-chestnut were swelling. It was April, the month of which we expect so much and get so little. It wanted only two months more to the day when I should be asked to make my choice. Later in the month I received a letter from Will. He was coming home. 'I have asked and obtained a furlough. Another man has been sent out who will carry on my work while I am at home. There are many other reasons besides the chief one which fills my heart day and night, and has filled it for three years.' This was the only time that he had ever alluded to his 'chief reason.' Poor boy! His heart was filled with the thought of a simple girl. How can men so think of girls, when they have all the splendid work of the world before them? I thought when he went away to China that he would carry with him a kind memory of his old friend and playfellow, but not that he would always think of her. What a strong and constant heart! 'There are many other reasons,' said the letter. 'First, I hear privately from one of the junior partners that I may be more useful to the House at home, and that my work here has been appreciated. Next, I want to know what my father means. He writes that he is now on the eve of repairing his fortunes; that a great future awaits him: that he shall be able to die happy when his time comes, because he will leave me a colossal fortune. I know that every one of his schemes was going to lead to boundless fortune, and I tremble. But my mother's money is held in trust. He cannot lose that. My poor father, with his imagination and ingenuity, might have made an excellent novelist, but in the City he was thrown away. Perhaps in a better ordered society men who are failures will be treated with the pity which should attach to those who have got into wrong grooves. A grocer who has compounded with his creditors, for instance, should be examined in order to find out whether he should not have been made a statesman or a divine, or a cobbler, perhaps; and so be instructed in the line for which nature intended him. Then everybody would be happy. Good-bye, Claire. Good-bye, Claire. Good-bye, Claire. It is nearly three years since I said that last, with Allen, in the dear old Forest. In four weeks more I shall be on board the mail. In ten weeks more I shall be in England again. WILL.'

I showed the letter to my father, who read it with a serious face. 'Will is a brave and gallant lad,' he said. 'He is stronger than the artist. Yet Allen has a quick eye and a ready brain. And the third? He is very rich. He devotes himself to the robbery of the greedy, the credulous, and the ignorant. Admirable trade! Thus nature, who neglects nothing, finds pirates to pillage thieves and fools. Worthy Olinthus! Thus he gains the admiration and respect of the world. My daughter, will this illustrious maker of money join the other two in June?'

'I do not know, but I think he will.'

'He does us infinite honour. Claire, child.' My father took my head in his hands and kissed me, with soft eyes. 'Is it possible that in two or three months—only two or three months—my daughter will belong to some one else? Alas! why do we have daughters who go away when they are loveliest and best, and desert their old fathers for their young lovers? In a better world a woman's beauty will last her life, so that there shall be no excuse for falling in love while their fathers are living, unless they are not only old but also foolish and—and—*maussades*, and not worthy of a good daughter. Then they might go away and rejoice their husbands.'

He was always the kindest and most thoughtful of fathers, but in those days it seemed as if he anticipated every wish, even the slightest, and was continually devising some little surprise, some new gift for me. It rained gloves; there were showers of pretty trifles; he went to town and came back loaded with books and music; he would have ruined himself had I not begged him to give me nothing more. And I knew that he was counting the days left to him of his daughter's undivided heart. The jealous, fond father! As if there does not always remain as much love in a woman's heart as ever was taken out of it! 'With each child,' said once to me a poor woman of the village who had twelve, 'with each child I felt as if there was no more love left.' But the love came—yes—the love came! Love is a fountain which can never dry.

Will was coming home in order to ask that question again. Will and Allen would both ask that question. Did ever before a girl have to choose between two men, both of whom she loved alike? But then this girl was presently to discover that she did not love both these men alike but very differently. And how that came about she does not quite know, even now, and does not care to question herself too minutely.

In those days, with Will's letter in my hand, I used to wander alone in the recesses of the Forest, those places known only to the boys and myself, and try to take counsel of my heart, which would give no advice or counsel at all and remained obstinately silent.

Allen wrote to me as usual and told me of his work, how the play was advancing and would soon be finished, and how he was planning that three-volume novel, and how he was asked to write for a new magazine. At all events, he had the desire of his heart: he was successful in the only way in which he desired success. Poor Allen! one remembered his early enthusiasm, his hero-worship, his first poor, thin attempts, his eagerness to work in the way my father pointed out to him, his enthusiasm and his early disappointments. He was changed, indeed. The eagerness remained and the industry, but the old enthusiasms which were the golden haze of morning, the splendid dreams

and illusions of youth, these were gone; to the imagination of a boy the round world and all that therein is seem so much more splendid than they are. He sees the type, the perfect model, and thinks that each individual example reaches perfection. As for me, I remembered also my father's illusions and designs. Allen was to have such a teaching as never any poet had before; he was to learn the unknown wants and wishes of the People; he was to lead the People—dream of an enthusiast who had never grown beyond the age of barricades. To lead the People! a noble dream, indeed, but not for Allen. Never at any time could it be possible for such as Allen.

It was in this month, I think, that in my daily walks and wanderings I became aware of a strange man. Even in the village, quiet as it is, the presence of a stranger does not excite universal interest; but this stranger came so often, and prowled about so mysteriously, that one got to suspect him of some design. He was about fifty-five years of age, rather a short man, with broad shoulders and a large grey beard; he wore coloured spectacles and a broad soft felt hat, rather like a clergyman's hat. He always smoked a cigar, and he sat about a great deal on stiles and gates looking always up and down the road as if he expected somebody. He seemed to come every fine day to the village, but I knew not where he came from.

One day as I passed him he took the cigar from his lips and addressed me.

'I beg your pardon miss. May I ask a question?'

I permitted him to put his question.

'You know, I suppose, the names of most all the people who live in this village, now?'

I said that I knew them all, or nearly all. He had, I noticed, some touch of the American in his voice.

'Do you, now, happen to know a lady named Engledew? She would be a widow, and about five-and-forty by this time.'

'Yes, certainly I know Mrs. Engledew. Do you want to see her? I can take you to her house. It is close by.'

'I should like to see her house, thank you. As for seeing her——' here he stopped short.

'The Mrs. Engledew I mean,' he went on, 'had a baby, I am told.'

'She has a son, now grown up.'

'Yes; it's four-and-twenty years ago. That seems a long time to you, no doubt, because you are young. It *is* a long time, whether to work out or look back upon, for people who have done things. But it isn't a long time for people who haven't done anything, and are consequently happy. For such it passes free and quick. Mrs. Engledew, now, is pretty happy, I dare say, being one of that sort?'

'No; she is not a happy woman. She has cause to be very unhappy. If you know her you know why

'I don't know her myself. But I am asked by one who does to come and make a few inquiries on the spot—cautiously, you know.'

'Cautiously! What is the need of caution? Mrs. Engledew lives here. You may see her any day. What do you mean by caution?' He avoided the question and made answer by another.

'Is her son, may I ask, in the Silk Line?'

'No; he is a man of Letters.'

The stranger whistled.

'Then I suppose they must want money, both of them, pretty badly! A man of Letters!'

'Neither of them wants any money. Come down this lane and I will show you the house.'

He walked at my side in silence.

'There,' I said, when we came in sight of the cottage where Mrs. Engledew lived, 'that is her house, and there you will find her if you want to see her.'

'I don't think I want to see her to-day,' he said. 'Not to-day. No. I think I shall just look at the house and then go. That will be enough for once. Another time I can call. When you know where to call there's a great deal done already. No hurry about the rest. Not any hurry, you know.'

'There is Mrs. Engledew. You can go and speak to her.'

The widow stood at the door. She was going to tidy up her garden, and stood in the porch for a few minutes as one stands who is irresolute where to begin. The man with me began to tremble, and he dropped the stick he was carrying. He really was a most mysterious stranger.

'There is Mrs. Engledew.'

'She is thinner than she was, but then she is older. Many people get thin as they grow older.'

'She has grown thin from suffering and sorrow.'

'I did not think,' he said, 'that she would age so much.

'If a woman's husband commits suicide on the eve of bankruptcy, caused by his partner's villainy, do you think that she is not likely to suffer?'

'No, no, of course'—he cleared his throat—'of course she must suffer in such a case. No one can blame a woman under these circumstances for getting thin. Through a partner's villainy. That's sad, now, isn't it?'

'You seem to know something about her.' I looked at him with increased wonder and suspicion.

'Yes, but she would not know me. It is no use my speaking to her, not a bit of use. I am only sent by another man to find out about her. Now that I have seen her I think I will go.'

'This is very strange,' I said.

'You say that she is in no need of money.'

'I believe not.'

'Nor her son either.'

'I believe not.'

'Is she hard and unforgiving, now? Does she still feel bad—about that business we were speaking of—the partner, you know.'

'Do you come from the man Stephens?'

'Maybe I do, maybe not. Does she feel bad about it still?'

'What can you think?'

'To be sure, to be sure: not a doubt of it. You would yourself—naturally—and yet she does not want money? No. And so, even if she had all the money that the partner ran off with, it wouldn't help her, would it? No, certainly not. Wherefore, I may as well go.'

He left me abruptly and walked away.

Two days afterwards I saw him again, sitting on a gate in sight of Mrs. Engledew's cottage. He was looking as if he waited on the chance of her coming out again. When he saw me he got off and walked away. Yet a week later I saw him again—and again after that. He was always sitting on the gate gazing steadily at the cottage, or he was walking backwards and forwards in an uncertain way, as if he was hesitating whether to go to the cottage-door or not. He always came in the morning; in the afternoon he was gone.

What did it mean? I was so full of my own affairs at this time that I thought little about this strange visitor. Yet he gave me some anxiety. What did he watch the cottage for? Who was this man, who knew Mrs. Engledew and remembered her as she was twenty-five years ago? Why did he lurk about the place? And had I done right to tell a strange man where this poor widow lived?

CHAPTER VI.

WITH ALLEN.

In those last weeks I was grievously troubled in my own mind about Allen. Let us not ask too carefully whether there was jealousy. Why should not these ladies love Allen? To be sure one of them was young and beautiful. They had done far more for him than I could do; he was right in loving them in return. Who (not being in the City) could choose but love a young man so full of genius, so handsome, so modest, so free from affectation? And they began with what seemed perfect safety, because Allen was already in love with another girl. Brother and sister from the beginning; and so—and so—they went on without

fear or caution, reading, talking, advising, planning, taking counsel together, till the heart of one was gone.

And the heart of the other? It was this that I wanted to find out. In order to do so I asked Allen if he would give me a whole day. It was already early May; the east wind had gone, and the showers of spring had begun. I contrived a little plot. I would make Allen feel exactly what coming back to me might mean. There was a broad gulf indeed between the Allen of the present and the Allen of three years before. I would make him step back and realise what life in the village would mean for him. Perhaps he still thought that he loved me; indeed, I am sure he did; he had been thinking so for a good many years; you do not easily break off such a habit of thought. Very well; then he should understand, without my telling him, how it would be to him were he to become my husband.

He came about noon. He brought with him his still unfinished play. He proposed to read it to me—always, he knew that I should like to hear what he was doing—and began at once upon the plot and the dialogue. But I put it aside, and talked of the village and its affairs. First, we must go and call upon his mother, a duty which he was perfectly willing to defer until the play had been discussed.

I think there is nothing more miserable than such a visit when confidence has been lost between mother and son. Mrs. Engledew asked no question about his prospects or his work, nor did she ask after his friends, she only said that he was looking well.

'And you, mother?'

'I am as well as I can now expect to be,' she replied; and one really felt quite certain that if her son had remained in the Silk trade she would have been quite well.

The visit was constrained, and short. When we came away, Allen gave a sigh of relief.

'It is too late now,' said Allen afterwards, 'to hope that things will ever be different; but I wish my mother could see things in a different light. If one were to become another Shakespeare, I suppose it would be the same thing. Oh! the City! the City!'

He shook himself impatiently.

We passed the Green, where Sir Charles was basking in the sun.

'You must go and speak to him, Allen,' I said.

Sir Charles received him kindly. He said that he was glad to hear that Allen was getting on, so far as people in his line can be said to get on, considering that the profits, if any, go to the publishers. It was consoling to his friends to feel that, though he *had* left the plough after putting his hand to it, he was earning an honourable pittance. Allen smiled feebly. Sir Charles went on to say that he had not read the book called

'With the People,' and that he did not mean to read it, because he did not like the people, and found them low—contemptibly low. One of them at a Lord Mayor's show once broke his carriage window with the neck of a bottle; they were a very low class: but if Allen would write a book on the Lord Mayors, or on knights, baronets, great merchants who have failed, and, generally, on the lives of gentlemen of exalted rank, he would promise to give it his very best attention.

When we left him, Allen seemed to me—but I may have been mistaken—to murmur strong words, as if he was choking.

And then we met Mr. Massey, ponderous and important. He was on his way to the City, but stopped to give Allen a condescending salute.

'You are looking thin, my boy,' he said. 'If you had remained in the City you would now be looking fat, like Gallaway. You should see young Gallaway. Well, it can't be helped, and I hope you won't fret over it. Perhaps—but I suppose it is now too late. Literature is but a poor trade, a poor trade.'

'Rich or poor,' said Allen, 'it is all I have.'

'All you have; very true. Tut—tut—tut. Dear! dear! All you have. Your poor mother feels it very much, I assure you, Allen. I tell her, whenever I find an opportunity, that literature is not generally regarded as disgraceful, though a sad falling off from the City. No literary man ever has a position, you know. If he goes to a City dinner, where is he to sit? Below the sheriffs, of course; below the aldermen; below the Common Council.'

'Of course,' said Allen, with a grin.

'I have now, myself, returned to the City. For some years I have been resting. I am, however, engaged in retrieving my fortunes. My son, I am happy to say, will, after all, be enriched by his father's exertions. I shall, on his return from China, buy him a partnership in one of the best Houses. Perhaps Brimage and Walton's. Good morning, Allen, good morning to you.'

'Venerable old jackass!' Allen murmured. 'Claire, let us get into the Forest quickly. Ugh! what a place it is!'

In the Forest I heard all about the play, and we decided that it would be a delightful thing to have it read in the old place where we used to run as children.

'Isabel shall read it,' cried Allen, kindling at the thought. 'Gertrude shall sit on the old trunk with your father.' Here a look of doubt fell upon his face. 'Do you think, Claire, that your father will like Gertrude?'

'You mean, Allen, will Gertrude like my father? I think she will.'

'Well, we will choose a fine day. What time of the day will be best, Claire? Shall we read it in the morning?'

'You will all dine with us, and after dinner we will walk

into the Forest, and there Isabel shall read it. Will that do?'

He stayed all that day with us. I was curious to observe how my father and he would get on together. In the old days, when the boy was ignorant, he accepted his master's maxims as words of wisdom. Now, however, how would it be?

What actually happened was that Allen showed, involuntarily, how far he had drifted from the path in which he was designed to go.

My father began to talk of the things which were in his mind.

'For thirty years and more,' he said, 'I have been as one who sits upon the bank and watches the current of the river. It is not without its charm, the life of contemplation, though I own that the active life would be my choice had I the power to begin again and to choose again.'

'It would be a very good subject,' said Allen, 'the man who could begin again if he chose, and at any time he chose.'

'In these thirty years, what a change! How great the work achieved for the people! How stupendous the work that is to be done by the people!'

'And how monotonous the effect when the general level has been complete!' said Allen. 'Art is made up of contrasts.'

'I forgot,' said my father coldly, 'I forgot that you are now an artist.'

He proceeded to ask Allen about himself and his progress, but made no more remarks about the People; and after dinner he left, and went to smoke cigarettes in the garden.

'How does the village strike you, Allen, when you come back to it?'

'It is detestable.'

'But there is the Forest.'

'True, the Forest. Yet it seems so much smaller than of old.'

'That is because you have grown so much bigger, Allen.'

'Is it better, for instance, than Burnham Beeches, or Windsor, or even the Lake of Richmond Park?'

'I do not know. It is good enough for me, even now.'

'To me,' he said, 'the memory of the Forest will always be dear. It seems a pity, almost, to disturb the old recollections by coming back at all.'

'Your new life, Allen, has made the old impossible. You would never return here with any pleasure. The talk of the residents would be intolerable to you.'

He shuddered.

'You would not live happily so near your mother, unless, which seems unlikely, she would change her point of view.'

'No, I could not.'

'Even my father, Allen, whom you used to respect so much——'

'Oh, Claire! to him, at least, I have not changed. I respect him as much as I ever did. I am as grateful to him as I ever was. Believe me, there is no man whom I love and respect more.'

'Yet, Allen——'

'Yet we have so little in common. His views are not mine. That is all.'

'And, Allen,' I went on, 'you could never give up, for the sake of anyone in the world, your new life, your club, your new friends, your new talk, to come back and live among your old friends in the old way.'

He turned pale: he shuddered.

'Ah, Claire,' he said, 'some things are worth life itself. This, my new life, is all the life I desire; yet I would give that up even at your bidding.'

'Poor boy! What would you have left if that were gone? What if I were to bid you say farewell to Gertrude, and to see Isabel no more?'

He blushed, and raised his eyes with a guilty look of suspicion.

'Isabel?' he asked. 'Isabel is a part of the life I would resign. She is my sister, Claire, my very dear sister. That is settled between us. You do not think—oh, Claire! you must not think—that there can be between Isabel and me anything——'

'Allen, I will always believe every word that you say; but the time for saying that has not quite come. It will soon be here—and, Allen, I asked you to come here to-day with a serious purpose. I want you, before Will comes home, to look round the old place again, to think of what you were three years ago, and of what you are. It will be good for you to think of this very seriously.'

He looked about him: he blushed and stammered.

'I cannot say what I should like to say, Claire. It is not quite time. You are always thoughtful for me. It was kind of you. Yes, I am changed, indeed, or else the place is changed. But you have not changed, except——'

'The place is so small. Is it not?'

'Yes, small, and its thoughts are mean. Yet there is the memory of the Forest and the place where we two dreamed away the summer evenings, while the bees droned and the late cuckoo called and the blackbird sang. Oh, happy time!'

'Go, make a poem of it, Allen. It will make a charming poem. Put in it your best and highest thoughts; then it will be a great poem. Isabel will recite it for you at one of the evenings.'

'I will, Claire,' he said quickly, 'I will. Oh'—why, he seemed to begin the poem already—'do you feel the warm soft air, as it used to fan our cheeks? Do you hear the buzz of the

insects, which was all our music? Do you catch the fragrance of the Forest, which kept our souls sweet and pure? Do you see the shadows lying across the glades, as they used to lie in the evenings, sinking into our hearts and filling us with thoughts? Do you see the boy and girl—such an eager boy, Claire, so eager to do far far greater things than ever he will be able to do? I think of him sometimes with a kind of awe that he should have grown into so small a man. And the girl, too, so sweet a girl, so full of sympathy—the sweetest friend that ever boy had!'

'Allen,' I interrupted, 'write the poem, and I will come when Isabel recites it. Go now and think—think of what I have ventured to say.'

'I go, Claire; but in a few weeks——'

'Go, Allen. Good night.'

'Art,' said my father presently, 'should be represented as a sorceress, who takes the strength from the hands of her lover, so that he can do nothing by himself but leaves him his eyes and ears. Then he watches and listens, and presently he imitates, groups, and copies. She is a beautiful sorceress, or else no one would fall in love with her. Yes, she takes away their strength; they can work no longer, and they have no heart for fighting.'

'They can sing and paint, and write romances and plays.'

'That is their reward, my child; but it is better to fight than to make songs of battle. Allen does not think so. Well, he has his reward.'

'And you yours,' I said. 'Why, who made the boy a poet?'

He lifted his shoulders and spread his hands.

The very next evening I had a visit from Olinthus. He came through the garden and walked through the open window. I did not see him at first; and, when I did, instead of offering me his hand, he began to groan in a most heartrending manner.

'What is the matter, Olinthus?'

'Nothing—that is, everything. But it doesn't matter. You will only say it's a pity; and the girls are provided for, and so is the old lady. It won't really matter to anyone.'

'But what is it? I suppose you are come here on purpose to tell me, are you not?'

'I have come to tell you, Claire, because you are the only person in all the world who will not jeer and sneer and grin. Even the girls will sniff. Oh! I know I should have grinned myself and sniffed, very likely, if it had happened to anybody else except me. Everybody in the City always grins when a man goes wrong.'

'Have you gone wrong, then?'

'Hush!'—he stole like a conspirator to the door and looked into the hall—'hush! Where is your father, Claire?'

'He is in the garden with Sir Charles. We are quite alone.'

'It's a dreadful thing. After two years and more of such success, it's a cruel thing—and I told him so—and a wicked thing. The man must be a devil. Yes, that's it. He can't be a man, he must be a devil; and he looks it.'

'If you will explain a little——'

He went on incoherently rambling.

'He led me into it; he gave me the taste for it, and made me feel the pride of it, and to seem clever and all; and then he wouldn't teach me how to do it, and I couldn't find out for all the trying in the world. Then he taught me to pretend. Ah! Claire, there's the sting when they find out that it was all pretence. The smash I could bear—anybody may smash—but it is the pretence that I can't stand up against. I shall go away to some place where they never heard my name. And live there for the rest of my life. I must. Why, they would laugh at me in the very streets if I were to go about. Oh, he's a devil! He must be.'

'What is pretence?'

'I will tell you all, Claire, just exactly as it happened, because you won't laugh. Besides, it was all done for your sake, every bit.'

'Every bit? Oh, Olinthus! And the Countess and the baccarat?'

'Very nearly all. The baccarat doesn't count. But I will tell you all, though I know very well what the consequence will be. I looked to coming here in two or three weeks with a diamond spray and an emerald ring. Yes! I've had my eye on the spray and the ring for a long time. And I've been looking for a house. None of your common four hundred a year Cromwell Road houses, but a palace in Kensington Palace Gardens. There is one to let now; a marble palace fit for a queen, or even for you, Claire. I was just going to close with the agent when I found that the place was let, and let to that—that man. Yes, I know what you were going to say, Claire, and it is like yourself to say it, but love in a palace is ten times as good as love in a measly villa.'

'I was not going to say that at all, Olinthus. I was going to say that it would have been a great pity for you to have built upon any hopes that—that——'

'Why, the other fellows are nothing at all: one of them only a literary scrub; and the other——'

'Will you please go on with your story?'

'And now it's all over. It's just as well that I did not take the house and order that spray, because now you won't even think of me. And yet I shall not be a pauper like Allen, or a clerk like Will. Perhaps you will consider that. Look here, Claire,' his voice sank to a whisper. 'I may be smashed, but

it won't all go. There's a snug little sum in my mother's hands : I gave it to her to keep for me three months ago, when we had our last great shindy. And besides, you've got plenty of your own, and perhaps your father might live with us. I should not mind it much, if I had the buying of the claret.'

'Do pray get on with the story, or I will get up and go away.'

'No, no, I *will* go on. Listen then. I am a ruined man. That is the first thing.'

'But I thought you were so rich and so successful.'

'So I was. Now I am ruined.' His voice broke down, and he began to cry like a school-boy. It was undignified, but he could not help it, and indeed it was a very pitiful thing after so much greatness. I could think of nothing in the way of comfort. However, presently he recovered a little, and went on to tell me all.

It was a truly wonderful story that he had to tell. The boy whom we had first thought dull and stupid, and had afterwards been compelled to consider a miracle of cleverness, had never really done anything at all to make the world change its opinion. He was, indeed, so dull that he was persuaded to lend himself to a most extraordinary deception, entirely for the advantage of the contriver. He was believed by everybody to have a wonderful genius and insight into finance : he knew nothing whatever about it ; while he was making thousands he knew no more of the science than any school-girl ; *he would not even learn it.* He knew only the talk or jargon of it. I looked with a sort of amazement at a man who had so little dignity and self-respect as to play the part which he had played.

'I've made for Colliber,' he said, with conviction, as if he really had made the money by his own sagacity and wisdom, 'I've made for Colliber over a hundred and fifty thousand pounds in two years. Why, my own share came to fifty thousand.'

'And where is it—all this money?'

'Some of it is spent ; some of it is—where I told you,' he jerked his thumb in the direction of his mother's house. 'Some of it the creditors will get.'

'But even now,' I said, 'you have not told me how it is that you are ruined.'

He then proceeded to explain with a great fulness how there was a rascally company established through the wicked cleverness of Mr. Colliber first, and next by himself, acting under Mr. Colliber's directions, and thirdly by a selection of modern brigands, for the purpose of plundering English investers. The company was rotten, he said, from the beginning ; it had not the slightest chance of success as soon as the real facts were known. But in order to get the shares taken up it was necessary to hide these facts very carefully. So the prospectus was drawn up by Mr. Colliber himself, and was a masterpiece of

suppression. Also in heightening and bringing out the few facts which could be of use to the new company the prospectus was unrivalled. The effect of this prospectus was that a great many of the shares were taken up and the company floated. And then began Mr. Colliber's usual game, which was to keep on forcing the shares by creating a demand and making a clatter about the company. More shares were taken up. But the facts came out. Then the shares went down to nothing at all, and the shareholders began to clamour.

'There is always some one,' said Olinthus, 'who won't lose his money without a fight for it. No one can deny that the prospectus was a bundle of lies. Colliber drew it up, so it must have been. All the prospectuses came out of my office, but at first nobody knew it. And now they've found it out, and they charge it upon me, and I've got to stand the racket.'

'What does that mean?'

It appeared that it meant this. He would have to take up the whole of the worthless stock. Now all his available money would not suffice to take up a fourth part of the stock. Therefore he must go bankrupt, unless Mr. Colliber stood by him. And at this juncture Mr. Colliber deserted him; told Olinthus that he had given him every opportunity for making his fortune; that for his own part no one could come upon him, because he was not mixed up in the business at all, and, in fact, he was not known to be concerned in any part of the business; but he had for some time been satisfied with the results of the partnership, and was, in fact, about to retire. He wished his partner success in the future; if he had to go bankrupt over this unlucky company it was only what he, Colliber, had done several years before; and that Olinthus, like himself, would be able to reflect with pride on his bygone greatness. Doubtless too, he added with a sneer, Gallaway would before long return to the work, bringing with him his old experience and the extraordinary sagacity which had astonished the whole world. He really was a most wonderful man, Mr. Colliber.

When I began to understand the story, I perceived that one was as much a robber as the other. I told Olinthus so. His sisters' dowries, the gift of a house to his mother, the money he had placed in her hands—all these ought to be restored and given to the creditors.

'As for my sisters,' said Olinthus, 'if I know the dear girls, they will see the creditors farther first; as for my mother, she won't give up her house unless she knows the reason why, nor the money, so long as she can stick to it. And as for me, I mean to stick to every penny that I can.'

He could not understand the iniquity of his own share in the matter. That Mr. Colliber was a clever rogue, he knew, and greatly admired his cleverness; but that he himself was anything but a deeply injured man he did not know or understand.

'If I had refused to put out that prospectus,' he moaned, 'he would have dissolved partnership at once; if ever I refused to do blindly what he ordered, he threatened that. And he was so greedy, and took three-fourths. And after all to make me liable!'

Mr. Colliber had then gone away. 'He has gone,' said his partner, 'with a hundred and fifty thousand in his pocket, and I have got to go bankrupt. As for consideration from the shareholders, not a bit, if you please. They'd tear me to pieces if they could. And if they did Colliber would look on with a grin.'

'Well, it is all over then.'

'All but the bankruptcy. That will happen in a few days, I suppose—or weeks—or something. I don't know. I've been to a solicitor, and put my affairs in his hands. There's enough for him at any rate.'

'Then, now, Olinthus, you can return to honest work.'

'Oh! the old trade again. No, thank you, Claire. I've got enough to live on, and I shall do no more work, honest or not.'

He was resolute upon this point. As for dishonest work, he could do it no longer, because he did not know how to do it. And as for honest work and drudgery, his three years of riotous living and easy gains made it impossible to take up again the monotony of steady work and slow thrift.

It really was no use telling him that he might now turn his attention to honest work.

'There's one good thing I've done'—he began to laugh, and the effect was like a gleam of sunshine on a rainy day. 'This morning, while I was sitting in my office, pretty miserable, wishing Mr. Colliber would come back if only to call me an ass and a fool, who should call but the Countess? She pranced in, smiling sweetly, and she said she came to apologise for her bad temper six months ago. But I knew what she wanted. She had never forgiven herself, she said, after my kindness to her, and that she couldn't sleep at night for thinking of her ingratitude, and would I forgive her? Nobody can tell lies so sweetly as the Countess. Well: I said I would—I knew what she wanted very well: and would I forgive her brother, who, she heard with pain, had written an intemperate letter. I said I would—I knew, of course, what she was driving at—if he would pay his debt of honour, which was seventy-five pounds. Would I then shake hands? I did shake hands with her, Claire, knowing what would come next. So then her ladyship sighed and looked friendly—she's got the most beautiful eyes, I must say—eyes that go straight through a fellow and make him feel groggy in the knees—and said that as we were now good friends again, and she meant never never never to lose her temper any more, she wanted to consult me about a little transaction. She had been recommended to buy Argentines or Brazilians. Which could I recommend? Now it was only two days before that

Mr. Colliber told me Brazilians would fall rapidly—he knew why, but did not tell me the reason. So I saw my chance. I was a cad, when she quarrelled with me: I was her dear friend when she wanted me. And so I told her to go away at once and buy as much Brazilian stock as she could get. She sailed away with the liveliest smile, I do assure you. I wish I had asked her to give me a kiss. And both she and her brother have put on a pot for Brazilians and are telling all their friends; and won't there be a row in a fortnight?'

Then I asked him if anybody else had been told the whole story.

He said no one.

Would Mr. Colliber talk about it?

He said that he supposed Mr. Colliber's interests lay rather in keeping dark.

In that case I advised him to tell nobody else, unless, which perhaps might be best and yet would be a hard thing to do, he made a clean breast of the whole business.

It gave him great consolation to think that he might perhaps still, though bound to future obscurity, pass honourably for having been once a great financier. In the first dismay caused by the disaster he felt as if all must be found out.

'I suppose,' he said, 'that it will take two or three months to get through the Court.—Oh! they are a vindictive crew. There's one man, a clergyman, who ought to be a Christian, and because he's lost a paltry five thousand pounds he heads the lot—says I made false representations. There's a pretty Christian for you! Well, Claire, I am glad I told you. Will that ten thousand make any difference in your views?'

'No, Olinthus. None.'

'And we might have been so happy together. We were made for each other. My mother says so, ever since you got your money. Before that, she said it was marrying beneath, and I ought to look higher.'

'Well—never mind. Thank you for thinking so much of me, Olinthus. I could never have married you, not if you had continued in your great success.'

'Never married me?'

'No; never.'

'Not if I'd got the house in Palace Gardens?'

'Not even then. Oh! Olinthus, can't you understand that I would rather marry you in your poverty than when you were heaping up riches by defrauding and plundering widows and children and credulous persons?'

But that he could not understand.

CHAPTER VII.

A SECOND VICTOR HUGO.

THEN the time began to pass swiftly towards the end. If you watch the flow of a river over a weir you will see that the water seems to linger and go slow a little before the point where it leaps the little cataract; then with a rush it sweeps forward, and is gone. For three long years I had waited in patience, yet never forgetting what was before me; at last the time seemed to move more slowly; to others, no doubt, it hastened forward, hurrying the old towards their end, the dying towards their death; but to me it seemed to linger so that every hour could be felt and remembered. Outside was the promise of the early summer in the gardens, and in the Forest the first fluttering foliage, on which the sunshine always, year after year, seems to lie like the bloom upon a peach.

I remembered a day long gone by, when we made a little picnic, one of many little picnics, in the Forest, and played about the glades, and the boys ran a race for what my father called the Prize of the Golden Apple, which was only an orange after all; and I held it for the victor. Now, after ten years and more, the boys were to stand before me again. Why, just as before, one of them was out of the race altogether; and of the other two, just as before, no one could say which of the two came in first. I knew not, who was the appointed judge; and yet the prize was no longer a golden apple, but a life's happiness. Not so much my own, but that of two men. Yet —the happiness of both? Of one there could be no doubt. He was so loyal, so steadfast, so true. Though he said no single word of love in his letters, it was clear of what his mind was full. And he was coming home—all that long way!—on purpose to keep his appointment. Poor Will! could one send him empty away, and with a bleeding heart?

It was of Allen that I doubted. I am quite sure by this time that poets and men of imagination, who are always creating another world of their own filled with imaginary people, who are always studying those people, and watching them, and thinking about them, take less real hold upon things of actual life than men of action. They dwell continually in the unreal, so that things actual may grow to look like things imagined. They think much less about themselves than ordinary folk; they desire for themselves little beyond the success of their work; they are not troubled with the ambitions of ordinary men, except as on-lookers, who are sometimes angered by the badness of a performance; the world is a stage to them, and men and women players. This is the reason, I suppose, why

they do not grow old like their friends, but remain young in heart, and at fifty are still full of youthful thoughts. All their waking hours they spend in dreams, among ghosts and shadows. When another man is in love he thinks all day long, and perpetually, of the girl he loves; but he who writes romances is always thinking of another woman as well, as well as of her whom he has married or is about to marry. She who marries such a man must be content to take a second place in her lover's heart without jealousy, because the first is occupied by the girl of his story, much lovelier, younger, cleverer than herself, and quite as real to him as the wife of his bosom. Again, a man who does not write can give all his best thoughts, if he is capable of fine thought, and his sweetest words, if he knows any sweetness of speech, to the girl he loves; but the man who does, keeps them for his own pages. He is a man of a thousand amourettes; he coquets with every little insignificant girl who crosses the stage in his dramas; he secretly entertains, and continually feeds and fosters, for his heroines, *grandes passions*; he is never out of love so long as he writes. What spare love can such an one find for his wife? It is a strange life. Does, one wonders, the man who has written many stories ever sit down to think of the long procession of beautiful girls, tender, sweet, and true, with their brave and gallant lovers whom he has created for the world's delight? Do they delight him only to think of them? Does he raise his own heart by repeating to himself the wise and noble things which his puppets have said? or is he ashamed in meditating on the foolish things he has allowed them to say? or does he—it makes one sad to think that he may do this—does he go away when his work is finished and straightway forget it all—the characters and their story, the lovers and the maidens, the sadness and the joy; and put them out of his mind lest they interfere with the grouping and the dialogue of the next story? I thought of all this, and perhaps thought too much of it. I remembered how Allen forgot and put out of his mind the girl whom he had made to live for ever in the memories of those who read his story. He must have loved her, while he wrote her life; yet he forgot her. Would he not forget me, too, if I were to go away out of his sight? And yet, on the other hand, why should one think of Allen in this way? There have been many poets, artists, and writers of fiction married happily for all that the world could see; and, after all, a mistress of flesh and blood must always be a very different thing from a mistress of the imagination. There was no change in Allen. He came to me for advice and help as he always had done—a man who must always lean on some one, and be encouraged by praise and pleasant words. Never for a moment had I suspected the least change in Allen's feelings. To make those eager eyes sad would be indeed a dreadful thing.

Yet there was Isabel. Should not one think of her? For I had learned her secret, and she was born to be the wife of such a man. She would live for him, divine his thoughts, lead him on, console and sympathize with him in the way that only one who knows the mystery and craft of literature can do. What could I do for Allen compared with what she could do?

Then it occurred to me that a way was possible in which the true state of Allen's mind might be discovered by him as well as by myself. It was simply that Gertrude should pay her long-promised visit to us before the day of Fate instead of after it. I wanted to watch Allen with Isabel again—even to question him, because it is difficult for a woman to read the mind of a man.

There wanted only a week of that day. I declare that I knew not, even so late, on whom the choice would fall; nor did I suspect in the least that there would be no choice to make. Only a week? Why Will must be through the canal. The ship must be driving through the water day and night to land him on the Italian shores. Only three days and he would be rolling across the Continent; only six and he would be among us again!

Gertrude was so good as to give up her evenings and her engagements, though it was the middle of the season, and the talk about the pictures and the concerts and all still in its freshness. It seems terrible to think that for the finest pictures, on which men have spent, it may be, years of work, there cannot be found more than a week or two of talk, even among people like Gertrude and her friends, who do not waste their time in society and scandal, and to whom the fashionable world is merely a spectacle when they choose to look at it for awhile. Only a week or two! And it is the same with the most beautiful book, the bravest deed, the finest work of music—only a week or two of talk, and then it is forgotten! But still it lives. In the world of London where new things follow each other so quickly needs must that to-day's event drives out the recollection of yesterday: but there is a world outside where new things last longer. Isabel brought with her Allen's manuscript play, now completed and intended to be read as a surprise for Gertrude. I was so foolish as to feel a little jealousy that she, and Allen with her, should be so eager about the play when a matter of so much importance was awaiting to be decided.

'You are wrong, my child,' my father said, reading my thoughts. 'To the artist his work is of more importance than his love. Let us read the play.'

Perhaps Allen had forgotten the nearness of the day. Gertrude, at all events, had not forgotten. She took both my hands in hers and pressed them as soon as we were alone.

'My dear,' she said in her sweet soft voice, 'I think it is wonderfully good of you to ask us at such a time. I thought

you would wait until—until we had sent Allen to learn his fate.'

'Has Allen forgotten the day?' I asked, with a little jealousy.

'We talked of it yesterday,' she replied.

I suppose I looked surprised. Could Isabel have discussed the subject? There is sometimes in women, a courage greater than the courage of man.

'My dear,' she added, 'you were quite wrong. Indeed you were. Isabel looks on Allen as her brother. We talked of you in the twilight. I think the twilight in a London house at this time of the year is delightful. There is the scent of the lime blossoms—of course I don't mean a house where there are no trees and flowers—in the air, there are flowers in the open windows, and as you sit in the dusk, strange thoughts come upon one. Yes, even to me, my dear, old as I am. And then outside there are the mysterious voices and steps of the people. What are they talking about? Whither are they going? Are they spirits or are they real? Yes, we sat beside the window and talked of you, my dear. Allen told us over again the story of his childhood and your early loves, and your sweet sympathy with him. Oh, Claire, it is an idyll of love.'

'Gertrude, you would not care for it unless you could dress it up and make it in your mind romantic.'

'It wants no dressing. There are some things which the imagination cannot improve. Why, you are a part of his life, Claire.'

'Yes, Allen loves me, I know that well enough. But yet——'

'But yet?'

'Will he not love me just as well and just the same if——'

'No, Claire—no, my dear; you must not think so.'

'Oh! Gertrude, can you not see? Are you blind? But listen, I have asked you here in order that Allen may find out for himself the difference. Gertrude, I could never make Allen so happy as Isabel will. And she loves him; I am jealous for Allen's happiness. I know that she loves him, even if she has never dared to let herself know the truth.'

Gertrude made no reply for a few moments; then she said, thoughtfully,

'Poor Isabel! and I never guessed. And you would let him go? My dear, it seems impossible. You would let this genius—this poet—go to another woman?'

'I would not if I were Isabel; but I am not—and—besides——'

'Besides, there is the other; but what is he like, then, the young hero? Is he an Apollo? Is he the Sun God? How does he outshine my poet?'

'You shall see him; he will arrive now in a day or two.'

'Before I knew you, my dear,' Gertrude went on, 'I was curious to find out who and what the girl was who drew all hearts. Now I know; yes, my dear,' she took my hands in hers, 'now I know very well indeed. But this Will, I cannot understand him yet.'

'You shall see him, Gertrude: but even then you may not understand him. Perhaps he will not be interesting to you, until you know him as Allen and I know him.'

Then my father came with Isabel and Allen, and our talk was stopped.

. . . . . .

Naturally, we began with the Forest. There is one fault, and only one, which can be alleged against my Forest. It is sometimes undoubtedly wet under foot. The soil is clay, and the water lies in little pools. One cannot deny the charge. This day, fortunately, it was dry; there had been sunshine for nearly a week, a most wonderful thing for this rain-plagued climate of England. We could walk anywhere; through the narrow lanes arched over with the tender foliage of the spring, among the old trunks where there were no lanes at all, and over the broad stretches of turf which once had been our playground, our race-course, our theatre.

'This is the Forest,' said Gertrude, looking round her, 'which made Allen—what he is.'

'Nay,' said Allen, 'not the Forest only, my Master is here.'

Said my father—

'He who teaches a young man sows an unknown seed in an unknown soil. He knows not what may spring up. I thought to make a statesman, and behold! I make a poet.'

'You could not,' said Gertrude, 'oh! you could not make a greater than a poet. To be a statesman! to make large promises and not to be able to do the smallest things; to be continually reviled and held up to ridicule; to sacrifice truth and honour for the sake of Party—you would not, M. Philipon, desire such a life for Allen?'

'I did, mademoiselle, and still I would desire such a life. To a strong man blame would be nothing. But the strong man will not get blame, because he can perform what he promises. Do you know why your statesmen are continually reviled and ridiculed, and why they have to go out every three years? It is because they pretend to be, but are not strong. The statesman of my hopes was one who would draw his strength from his own knowledge, not from the ignorant people who would send him to power. I dreamed of the strong man whom we all look for, but who never comes.'

'And then—and then,' said Gertrude, 'literature is the natural ladder by which young men may climb.'

'That is, pardon a thousand times, perhaps the least sus-

picion of prejudice. It shows that the Republican idea has not yet touched the heart of mademoiselle. Why not a boy from a quiet and obscure village, taught by a Frenchman, as well as a young earl or the son of a cotton man?'

What my father said was true. Gertrude would have thought it a laudable ambition in a rich man to train his son for a political career. Yet it seemed to her absurd in the case of a poor lad born to be a city clerk. We know so little of the depth and reality of the Republican spirit which is abroad, outside our little island. It did not seem absurd to my father—this ambitious project.

'All statesmen,' said Isabel, 'seem to me false and treacherous. Better the smallest ballad, if it is good, than the longest speech.'

'However,' said Gertrude, 'it was a noble dream, and this is a beautiful place. If you had not lived here, M. Philipon, Allen might have realised your hopes, and made speeches to the people. Let us sit a little and feel the silence. This is better than Richmond Park.'

It was so silent that afternoon, that we might have been fifty miles from any dwelling-place of man. No one was in the Forest except ourselves. We sat upon the fallen trunk which had been our friend so long, and were silent. There was a lark overhead, and there was a twitter of birds from the trees; a blackbird and a thrush were not far off, a cuckoo was close beside us; a long way off we heard the tinkle of a bell. I had never known the Forest more silent or sweeter. As we sat, the lark suddenly dropped straight down; the twitter of the birds ceased; there was a stillness which made itself felt, while overhead there hovered, motionless, a hawk. Presently it darted away and the birds began again.

'In this place,' said Gertrude, breaking the silence, 'one might dream away a lifetime. Of course Allen became a poet. Why did you not all dream in sweet verse? We must come, Isabel, and stay here a long summer through.'

'The Forest is not always so gracious,' I said; 'sometimes it is wet and muddy; sometimes in cloudy weather it loses its colour, and in cold east winds it loses its perfume.'

'A forest is like the sea,' said Gertrude. 'Its moods are many; they are never quite the same; and one never tires of it, and one is always tempted to say something about it; something which shall be new, a thing never said before. Like the sea, it satisfies; it is sympathetic; it responds to every thought.'

'And yet,' I said, 'you would long for London and your evenings after you had been here a month.'

She laughed. 'I believe I should. That is my punishment, to love nature much, but society more. After all we are gregarious.'

Then it grew time to leave the Forest, and we came slowly

back. I lagged behind with Gertrude, and Isabel between my father and Allen.

'Does your father never desire more society—a more active life?'

'Not now. I think he did at one time. When we became rich, that is, what we call rich, his habits were formed; he desired nothing more than to bask in the sunshine and to work in his garden. So we remained here.'

'But you will not remain here now——'

'I do not know.'

'You would not—oh! Claire, you could not take Allen away; yes, I know you have told me, but I cannot believe.'

'Could I take him from you, and from his present life, and from Isabel? Do you think I could if I were to try?'

'I think you can do with him what you please.'

'I can do a great deal, but not quite that. Without you, dear Gertrude—and Isabel—he would have no life.'

'Ah, Claire! do not make him unhappy.'

'Perhaps I will make him the happiest man in the world. Is he not a man who wants constant encouragement and sympathy?'

'Yes; more than any man I have ever known. And he seeks it of you.'

'Yes; he tells me of his anxieties, but he finds his encouragement—from Isabel.'

After dinner, we had arranged for Isabel to read Allen's play, of which Gertrude knew nothing. It was a three act drama, a tale of the present day. We converted the drawing-room into a little theatre, of which the stage was one end. I was the orchestra at the piano, and we placed three chairs for the audience, consisting of Gertrude, my father, and Allen. My father was as yet not advanced much beyond the stage of compliment; he had made a great many of the dear old-fashioned kind about wit and beauty, and Venus and the Muse, but I have suppressed them. Gertrude, however, liked them, and said that a woman never became too old to value a compliment, and that in the dear old days of the *salons* it was a man's chief study how best to turn a compliment. I think indeed that my father would have been better pleased if we had proposed to spend the evening in these harmless gallantries, especially with Isabel. But we gave him no choice, and he had to sit down and listen. I remembered a former occasion when Allen read his first verses, which were so execrable that I could have cried. My father assumed exactly the same critical attitude with a certain benevolent kindliness, as if he was prepared to sacrifice truth to compliment, because Englishmen, as is well known, cannot write plays, but must needs steal them from the French. Allen, doubtless, would be no exception, still he must be heard.

Then Isabel began. I suppose it was an easy thing for her

to do, but to me it certainly seemed a very great thing. She had actually learned the whole drama; she rolled up the manuscript, holding it in her hand as an aid to gesture, and began to act the play. She acted it so well that my father quite forgot his critical attitude and his benevolent expression, and became, naturally, the Frenchman at a play; in other words, he sat with parted lips and wonder-stricken eyes, drinking in the scene. To see an actress on the stage among the painted scenes, dressed for her part, among the rest of the company, is one thing. To see her acting in ordinary evening dress, in a drawing-room, is another and a far greater thing. For to be carried away by the illusion of a stage is easy, but it is only a real actress who can carry her hearers out of themselves, with no scenic effects, no dress, no assistance of any kind.

This Isabel did; she played the parts each in turn herself; she became all the parts, one after the other; we did not want to be told who was speaking; by quick gesture, by sudden change of voice and manner, she sustained the whole. And I alone knew that she played it for one of her audience. Only my eye saw her quick glance at Allen, which said, although he saw it not, 'Is this the true interpretation of your thought? Poet, is this justice to your work?' No; Allen seemed not to see it. He looked nervously from Gertrude to me as if he read our verdict. Isabel had taken all this trouble for him; she was interpreting his thought; she was giving life to his puppets. He took her labour as if it was a gift of no consequence. Poor Isabel!

When she finished, at the very last words of the third act, her voice broke down, she stopped suddenly, and she fled. To the others it seemed an artistic finish: the drama ended, the actress disappeared. It was like the dropping of the curtain. I, who knew better, followed her. She had rushed to her own room where I found her weeping and crying.

'Isabel,' I threw my arms round her and kissed her. 'Isabel, I have learned all.'

There was nothing to learn, she declared. It was the exertion; she was foolish; she would be better directly, she was better already.

She rose at once; she bathed her eyes and met my look with a calm and steady gaze. Yet she knew that I possessed her secret.

'Oh, Isabel!' I whispered, 'can you think that I would take him from you?'

'But he loves you—you—you,' she replied passionately. 'We must make him happy. That is the first thing. We must make him happy. Come, Claire, what does it matter about ourselves? We have got to make him happy.'

We went back. Gertrude and my father were waiting for us. Then my father rose and solemnly bowed low to Allen.

'Poet and dramatist,' he said, 'I salute thee. Thou shalt be a Master, another Victor Hugo, a Châteaubriand.'

Allen blushed and trembled with pleasure.

Then he turned to Isabel. 'Mademoiselle,' he said, 'it is the province of your art to interpret the art of the poet. Permit me to lay at your feet the assurance of my most profound admiration. Rachel could not have acted better.'

'You played it so well, Isabel,' I said, 'because no one knows Allen so well as yourself.'

'It is a great play,' said Gertrude. 'Give me the manuscript to-morrow. No, Allen, I will not dare to alter a single word. But I will suggest, perhaps. Isabel, my dear, you played better to-night than you have ever played before.'

'What can I say to thank you enough, Isabel?' asked Allen.

'Oh!' she shook her head, 'I want no thanks. If Claire thinks that the play is good and worthy of you, that is enough.'

'Tell Allen, *mon père*,' I said, 'what we think of his play.'

'It is a play so good, my son,' he replied, 'that Claire shall translate it into French and we will offer it to the Français. Can I say more, my dear?'

Allen's face was soft and his eyes luminous with the joy of his work. I laughed in my heart to think that this man was to be judged as an ordinary lover. There was a mathematician once who forgot his wedding-day; there was a German scholar who so far observed that festival that he only read for twelve hours instead of fourteen; there was the case of Sir Isaac Newton who used his mistress's finger as a tobacco-stopper; but I think I cannot remember any instance in history of a poet three or four days before the question which is supposed to mean a life's happiness has to be answered, who yet was carried away and absorbed in his own poem.

Isabel's eyes met mine, and made answer, 'What does it matter about ourselves? We have first to make them happy.'

CHAPTER VIII.

WILL'S RETURN.

THE next day and the day after, and the day after that, we showed our guests all our beautiful places; we drove about through leafy lanes and past picturesque cottages standing in the midst of flowers; we went to the quiet little town of Abridge, on the river Roding, standing in a circle as if it had once been within a round wall; we showed them the wild parts

of Epping Forest and Copt Hall Park, and the burial place among the quiet trees of Harold and his brothers; we took them to Chigwell with its great trees and solemn churchyard, and to old Chingford Church, falling slowly and sadly to pieces, with shattered windows and bending roof and bare interior, and quiet old place of graves, which looks out upon the broad valley of the Lee. Everywhere there were trees with sunshine, flowers, and the singing of birds and a sweet calm.

'My dear,' said Gertrude, 'this is the true birthplace of a poet.'

'Yet at the West-end you know nothing of it.'

'I thought that Epping and all about it was given over to the mob who drink beer and break branches and shout,' she said.

'Only a little of the forest. Beyond High Beech you have solitude and quiet. At Hainault we are nearly always left in peace. And the quiet lanes beyond are never visited.'

'I am glad to have come here,' she said. 'Isabel, do you feel that we understand Allen better from seeing the place where he was brought up?'

Isabel was thinking about him, I suppose, because she started and blushed.

'To-night,' I said, 'you will meet some of the people among whom Allen lived. They, at least, did not help to make him a poet.'

It was my evening. They all came: Sir Charles and Lady Withycomb, and Mr. and Mrs. Massey, and Mrs. Gallaway with her three daughters, and some of the girls from the school and some from the village, and half-a-dozen young men. I was very careful that Gertrude should talk to most of them. It was delightful to witness her bewildered look when the good old City knight told her of the glorious failures of the leading residents and related his story about the Prince of Wales. I wanted her to understand perfectly, that in this talk of money and of the City there was no place for the lofty thoughts and splendid verse on which Allen's soul had been nourished. I wanted to make her feel that the only house in the village where such things could be encouraged or comprehended was our own, and the only man who could encourage them was my father. He it was, and none other, who had made a poet out of a City clerk. As for my evening, it was not, to be sure, like Gertrude's. We had no people who had done anything, but we amused ourselves. The school-girls played a Proverb of De Musset's, and Sir Charles went sound asleep and snored; one or two of us played and sang; and presently we cleared away the chairs and began as usual to dance; and while I played the first waltz, I heard Mr. Massey explaining to Gertrude the folly and wickedness of Allen in giving up his place and prospects in the City for the penniless and despised

profession of letters. This annoyed me for the moment, because I thought she might be set against Will, since he had a father of mind so narrow. He also told Gertrude, but this I learned afterwards, that Allen had no chance with me at all, and his own son very little, because the third suitor, Olinthus Gallaway, had arisen to so amazing a pitch of greatness that it was impossible for a dazzled maid to resist his attractions. Altogether Gertrude passed a very astonished evening.

It was eleven o'clock and our friends were beginning to separate, some of the elder ones had already gone, we were dancing the last waltz, Isabel and Allen together, and I was sitting out.

Do you know that there are some sounds which you can hear above and among all others, however loud they may be? The sound I heard, above the music and the laughter and the talk, was the sound of a footstep on the gravel of the garden walk. I had not heard that step for three years. But yet I knew and heard it amid the buzz of talk, the sound of the piano and the laughter of the girls. It surprised me for the moment to think that Allen did not hear it. But he was dancing with Isabel. His arm was round her waist: her face was lying on his shoulder. How should he hear?

I sprang to my feet and stepped quickly through the window, which was open to the lawn. The night was dark, but I saw his figure standing within the garden rails as if in hesitation, and I ran across the lawn to meet him. He seized me as I came by both hands and held them in his strong firm grasp, though his voice trembled.

'Claire!' was all he said. And I said nothing because I could not speak, and because at that moment I felt that there was no longer any doubt or hesitation possible, and that for me there was only one man in the world whom I could love, as Will wished me to love him.

Had he taken me in his arms that moment I should have told him all; but he did not. He only held my hands for a minute and let me go.

'Come, Will,' I said, 'and see my father.'

'I have not seen my own yet,' he replied. 'I came here straight from the station, where I have left everything till to-morrow. But you have a party, Claire.'

'It is only my evening. Come, Will, I have told you about my evenings.'

'One moment, Claire. You are well? Let me look at you.'

We were on the lawn, and by the light of the room he looked in my face, and I in his. My heart sank, and I felt humbled and ashamed because of the great love which I saw in those brave eyes of his. Never girl had braver lover.

Then I turned away, confused, and led him by the hand into the room; and my father sprang to his feet and cried, 'Will!'

and the dancers stopped, and Allen left Isabel, and the girls of the village all ran to shake him by the hand; and the school-girls caught hold of each other and looked at me, because they knew—dear me! everybody knew—my love-story, and gazed upon the suitor whom they had never seen, and whispered to each other that he was the tallest and properest of the three. Isabel stood by Gertrude's chair watching him curiously.

He was only a handsome lad when he went away; he returned to us a handsome man now, firm and well set up, his cheek a little bronzed with the sea-breezes; a strong man, his head erect, his bearing confident, his voice firm. He shook hands with all the girls, laughing, and then with my father, and, last of all, with Allen.

'I knew, Allen,' he said, 'what would happen. Tell me, Claire, does he know how proud we are of him?'

There was always a great contrast between the two; the one so eager, restless, and nervous, and the other so self-reliant, so calm and strong; but it seemed intensified. Allen's eyes had, more than ever, the far-off, expectant look of one who lives in imagination. Will's more than ever the steady, watchful look of one who works. His eyes were like the eyes of a pilot for trusty watch and ward. For him, the world was full of work to be done, and it was no place for dreams. To Allen, the only work was in dreams. Then I led him to Gertrude.

'Gertrude,' I said, 'this is Will; he landed this very day, and has come straight to see us. Will, this is Miss Gertrude Holt, and this is Miss Isabel Holt. They are Allen's very best and dearest friends, and have helped him to make the splendid beginning of which we are all so proud.'

Gertrude shook hands with him, saying something kind. After that, the evening was broken up. Everybody felt that we should like to be left alone, and they kindly went away. But the eldest Miss Gallaway whispered to me, with meaning, that Olinthus would be jealous if it was not for the fact that there were only three days left. She also said that Allen's disappointment would be easily consoled, and that something must be done in the village for the consolation of Will. Olinthus, she said, was talking of a house in Kensington Palace Gardens; of course, it mattered nothing to him what the rent would be; and he had let fall something about a carriage and pair; but that his wife would have every reason to expect, and it was, in fact, due to his position. Then she went her way. Poor girls! They little knew that the greatness they thought so much of was destroyed already irrecoverably.

So they were all gone and we were left to talk.

At midnight Gertrude left us, and soon after my father. I made Isabel stay; I wanted to make her feel, somehow, as if Will belonged to her, as well, already, because he would in a way belong to her in the future. One could not look forward

to any severance of the sweet ties of love and friendship between us all. We went into the garden and sat with shawls about our heads talking through the short summer night.

First we made Will tell us all his adventures, or as many of them as he could think of, because it was absurd to suppose that a man had been away for three long years, and among Chinamen with pigtails and Chinawomen with flat faces and pinched-up feet, without having more adventures than he could tell in a summer night. Ridiculous to tell us that residence in Shanghai is as dull almost as residence in our village by the Forest.

'It is, indeed,' he said, 'as monotonous as life in the City but for the people you meet, the people from all over the world, the people with stories of adventure to tell. You come across them on board the steamers; they are going no one knows whither and coming no one knows whence, and they live no one knows how. They are always ready to go on to Fiji, or to land on Borneo, or to take a place at Shanghai; only to talk with these men is worth going all the way to China.'

'And no adventures, Will, among the Chinese?'

'None at all, Claire. But a good many talks among them. Never believe that the Chinese are a worn-out race, or the Chinese Empire rotten. They are as vigorous a people as any in the world. Wait till the tug comes of Cossack *versus* China.'

We all agreed that we would wait, and presently he began to tell us long stories of the places he had seen, the narrow seas, the beautiful islands of the Malay Archipelago, Singapore upon its hills, and green Penang.

'You have heard enough about myself,' he said.

Just then the church clock struck one, but nobody took any notice. As if we were going to be ruled by clocks on the night when Will came home!

'Come, Allen, you have done something for yourself worth doing. Tell me about yourself, and how you have got on?'

Then Allen, with much hesitation, began to tell his story, all of which you know perfectly well already, and how he had made no money yet but plenty of hope—that is to say, no longer the vague hope of a boy but the hope grounded on work done and praise gained. Isabel helped him with a word or two. All the night she was considering Will curiously, as if wondering how such a splendid man could come from so mean a place. Why, it was all my father's doing. He made a man of action and ambition out of Will and a poet out of Allen, and both by the same method; but then there could never be another man like my father.

And then we had to tell about Olinthus and his surprising rise, so that he alone out of the three who went into the City resolved to emulate Whittington seemed to have succeeded. I, for my own part, felt horribly, dreadfully guilty, because I

knew the shameful, foolish secret of it all, and could have foretold the conclusion. If a man has been away for three years, there is so much to be told that can never be told by letter. We had became rich, Will had been told that by letter, and he rejoiced: we had left our little cottage and taken a large house, Will was told that; we got together the people of the place and had a weekly evening, he was told that; he was told everything, and yet until he saw for himself, he did not understand the difference all these things made.

'When I went away,' he explained to Isabel, 'nobody ever met; there was no dancing or singing or any pleasant things at all, only talk about money and the horrible stories about the bankrupteies.' Allen shuddered. 'And Claire lived in a pretty little cottage with rooms about as big as cupboards like a doll's house, didn't you, Claire?'

'I have shown Isabel the furniture we had,' I said. 'We have kept it all and put it into the smallest room of the house.'

'And then I come home and find a dance, actually a dance going on, in the village, and the girls looking as if they enjoyed it, and my dear old friend like a nobleman of the *ancien régime*. To be sure, he always had that air, but not so much.'

'And yet a Republican, Will.'

'I know, or rather a man filled with the enthusiasm of humanity.'

'Oh! the dream—the dream,' Allen said impatiently. 'It was fortunate for me that I never knew, until too late, about that dream.'

'A noble dream,' Will said, 'the noblest of all dreams. Yet, Allen, you always longed for what you have. Are you happy at last, Allen?'

He laid his hand on Allen's shoulder in the old familiar way. When girls kiss each other, young men lay heavy hands on each other's shoulders.

'I am as happy as I can be,' Allen replied. 'Am I not, Isabel?'

'How can I tell?' she replied, quickly. Then she added, gently, 'If to have succeeded in what you most desired makes one happy, you ought to be happy, Allen. For you have already succeeded.'

Will looked at his old friend with a quick, involuntary glance of surprise, first at him and then at Isabel. I knew, very well, what he meant. Could Allen be happy, he thought, with that question still to be answered? And who was this girl who sat with us as if she were one of us, one of the little band of friends? Why did Allen turn to her? Next day, when an opportunity came, he asked me what those things meant. I told him—well, the convenient half truth which left him even more puzzled than before. In no society of which he had any experience did the young men and the maidens, who were

neither brothers and sisters nor cousins nor lovers, call each other by the Christian name, and talk with an absence of reserve so complete. 'Can a man be in love with two girls at once?' he asked.

'I think not, Will. Perhaps these are the manners and customs of the literary world, of which, you see, you know nothing. It is a pretty custom, is it not?'

'For a girl to be called by her Christian name by all the men? I am only a Chinaman, Claire, and know nothing, but I shouldn't like to see you, for example, called by your name.'

'Perhaps it is only a custom of the house, Will.'

He shook his head and laughed. 'Perhaps it is only Allen's playful way,' he said. 'Poets must do what they please. They are privileged. What does it matter if Allen is happy?'

Why, here was Will, like all the rest, falling into the universal plot and conspiracy to make Allen happy!

So we talked, and the short night drew on to daylight. It was nearly three o'clock in the morning, and the sun rises, in June, before four.

'No one wants to go to bed,' I said. 'Let us all go into the Forest and see the sun rise.'

Isabel and I changed our dresses for short walking frocks and stout boots, and we sallied forth into the still and quiet morning. We crossed the dewy meadow and plunged into the Forest, where beneath the trees there were hanging about some shadows of twilight. I told Will to lead the way, if he remembered.

'As if I could forget!' he said, and led the way.

I went next and Isabel followed, Allen came last, as Will led us from the open glade by a wet and narrow lane—but no one cared for the long wet grass—among low overhanging branches to where on a high ground we could stand and see the rising of the sun.

Did you ever see the sun rise? You may see it, if you are awake, on an average, I suppose, about one day in six, and in June, when the mornings are mostly fine, about every other day. In order to see it in the summer you must sit up all-night, as we did; or you must get up very early indeed when you are in the middle of your sleep. I had seen it from my bedroom window in the old days, and especially those sad days when the boys first went away and I used to lie awake at night wondering how one could live three years without them. Then I used to sit at the window and watch the east for the first streak of day, though when it came it very often found me sleeping in the chair. But it is best to see it in the Forest with the trees behind you, the grand old trees which seem like yourself to be waiting for the sunrise, and trees beside you and trees sloping away before you, and far away in the distance the country dark, silent and mysterious. But in the trees there is the twitter of

the birds, they are only half awake and they are dreaming. And in the branches there is the rustling of the leaves, as if the morning breeze was waking them from their slumbers. Then in the east the grey light which lies all round the horizon on a summer night begins to put on colour; and faint beautiful shades of opal, sapphire, and colours which have no name and have never yet been caught by painter lie in broad belts one above the other, each for a few moments only, and then long fingers of light shoot upwards into the sky, and the belts of colour melt and blend together, and all the birds wake up together and break into the morning hymn of praise, and the sun rolls upwards and warms the cold bosom of the earth. And who am I that I should try in feeble words to speak of this grand pageant of the dawn?

Suddenly a lark began to sing high over our heads, and we started and looked at each other.

'Claire,' whispered Isabel, catching my hand, her eyes filling with tears, 'I shall never forget this night, never—never. Oh! my dear, I know not what to think or say.'

'It is a fitting end to our talk,' I said. 'Will has come back and Allen has succeeded, and we are at another dawn, of a better day. Come, Isabel, let us go home.' We left the boys, and went back together hand in hand, but silent.

'I have suffered, dear Isabel,' I said, 'because I did not know; but now I know and I am happy. It is the dawn of a happy day for you, dear Isabel, who love one of the two so much, and for me, because I love—the other. Kiss me, dear. Let us always be sisters. You have taken Allen's heart from me, and you have only made me happier for the loss. Remember what you said, "Above all things we must make him happy."'

'Oh, Claire!' the tears came again into her eyes. 'Can you, can any girl, give up Allen? And besides, you do not know——'

'Hush! Isabel. I know very well; but let us keep our secret.'

It was half-past four by this time. I suppose we ought to have gone to bed and lain awake thinking of our lovers. Alas! we were both outrageously hungry, and we went to the supper-room and ate cold chicken and drank claret-cup, and went to bed laughing as if there were no such thing as love in the world.

As for our lovers, I believe they had cigars and did not go to bed at all. And I know for certain that temper was exhibited in certain quarters when it became known that Will, after three years' absence, actually went first of all to see Claire, with whom and Allen Engledew he sat up all the night, only calling upon his own mother in the morning. I went to bed and to sleep, and perhaps I dreamed the thing and perhaps I heard it, but when I awoke a voice was in my ears—the voice of my

father—and words saying, 'She will choose between the two, the man who acts and the man who writes, and I think that she will surprise us both. But let us wait, and find consolation for the others.'

Could Gertrude and my father have talked together in the garden while I was still asleep? and could I, in half-waking dreams, have heard them?

The man who acts. Surely it is best for a man to act. Men have to do the work of the world. That man who does it carries out the purpose for which he was born better than the man who talks about the worker. My choice? Why I never had any choice. Although I thought I was going to sit down and exercise a deliberate judgment, I could not do otherwise, when the time should come, but hold out both my hands and say, 'Take me, Will, I am your own.' I believe, if you rightly consider it, that this is the case with every woman. She does not choose, but she gives her love—because she cannot choose but give it.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OPINIONS OF A CHINAMAN.

The return of one native is, I suppose, a great event in a quiet village, and here were two natives returned, one, at least, carrying his sheaves with him, although to the general eye he seemed as if he was laden with straw and chaff and stubble and tares, instead of golden grain. So that the return of Will, who had certainly 'got on' in a material way, created more general interest. Besides, Allen had never been really away, and rumours were always afloat of his starving agonies and mad ambitions. Most of the residents pictured him as sitting with a tight belt round his waist, to keep down the pangs of hunger while he wrote poems which nobody would buy, or paragraphs for daily papers at a penny a line—they were very eloquent on that penny a line—Mr. Skantlebury especially, knew all about it; or else he was imagined as forming one of a mad-cap crowd of roysterers, singing and drinking with the accompaniment of tobacco. Mr. Massey it was who knew how literary men always sit up o' nights together, and get drunk and sing and smoke pipes. It was, I think, rather a disappointment to most of us when Allen came back, certainly well fed, well dressed, and not, so far as could be seen, greatly given to drink.

'I have been talking to Sir Charles, Claire,' said Will to me, 'and I have been having it out with my father. I have received the congratulations of Mr. Skantlebury on my arrival. I have been wept over by Allen's mother, who said that I was the supplanter of her son; but she did not blame me. I have

been warned by Mrs. Gallaway'—here I believe I blushed—'and I have been to town and called upon Tommy—Tommy the Great—Trismegistus—thrice greatest Tommy!'

'Did you call at his office?'

'Yes, I did, at eleven in the morning. Claire, there is something wrong with His Greatness. He looks pale. He pulled out a pint of champagne while I was with him, and because I would have none he drank it all himself. He grinned in a ghastly way when I congratulated him on his success. There is something wrong with Olinthus.'

I knew very well indeed what was wrong with him, but I would not tell him.

'Tommy did not pretend the ordinary polite rejoicing at my return; did not say he was glad to see me; did not ask me to dine with him at his club or anywhere else; did not show, or pretend, the least interest in my movements, and he seemed mightily relieved when I came away. But perhaps he had his work upon his mind—another fortune to make before noon, I dare say.'

This was just what one would have expected of the poor man. With ruin staring him in the face, the visit of his old schoolfellow would only distract him.

'His cheeks are flabby and his hand shakes, and his eyes are blood-shot. On the whole, Claire, I would rather not be in poor old Tommy's shoes. But what a fellow he is! Fancy his hiding away those wonderful powers of his! And fancy ourselves being such donkeys as to call him stupid! We used to laugh at him, Allen and I, because he couldn't understand things at school. He was stupid, was he? Why, this finance business, which I take to be pure plundering and robbery, is a thing which wants a quicker brain and wider knowledge than any other trade in the world. Where did he pick up his knowledge?'

I knew that as well, but I could not tell him.

'When I asked him he sighed and said that he didn't know whether the thing was worth the trouble it had cost him. Trouble! it must have been downright, resolute work of the hardest kind, coupled with the most extraordinary sagacity. You see it means nothing more or less than to find out for certainty the things which are kept in the background. You must know all the secrets and all the motives. Perhaps he kept a detective branch in his own service. I asked him what he had made in the three years; but he refused to tell me, and altogether looked so glum that I came away. I expected to find him swaggering over his money after the old fashion. What does it mean?'

It meant that the great financier was going to be horribly punished, and perhaps held up to ridicule. But that I could not reveal. Will went on.

'Coming home in the train I heard some talk which adds to my presentiments about him. There were two men talking about some company or other. I heard the name of Gallaway mentioned, and one of them began to tell a long story about the way in Mr. Olinthus Gallaway has been making money. I partly suspected it before. It seems that he has been following the same game as that carried on ten years ago or so by Colliber. This man seemed to know something about it. There is a row impending, it appears. They are going to make an attempt at fixing a certain prospectus on Olinthus. If he can be proved to have framed this prospectus, an action will be brought against him. It is quite certain that he took up and sold the shares. I wonder if that is the reason why Tommy looked so glum. The man in the train said that if such an action could be brought, and was successful, the result would make one of the richest men in the City a bankrupt. Another man, who seemed vindictive, remarked that for his own part he should like nothing better than to see him and all such fellows on the treadmill. I suppose he was a shareholder in one of the illustrious Tommy's companies.'

I changed the subject.

'You have not told me, Will, how you find the place and all the people in it. Allen says it has grown so small. The Forest is only a wood of very limited extent; he can no longer feel lost in it, and he has ceased to feel any awe for the glorious bankrupts.'

'I do not find the place any other than it used to be, but the people are changed. Mr. Colliber is gone, which seems a good thing for everybody. The man used to remind me of a hawk, with his hooked nose and sharp eyes and quick savage manner. I never think of a financier without supposing him greatly to resemble Mr. Colliber; when I called upon Tommy I fully expected to find that his features were changed, and I am disappointed. He might be thought to look a little like an owl, with his fat cheeks, but not at all a hawk.'

'Yes, Mr. Colliber went away without telling anyone he was going.'

'As for the Gallaways, I suppose it is quite natural that they should be proud of their brother; but perhaps they are a little more inflated than one would like to see. And they did dwell upon the contrast between my position and Tommy's. I wonder if they understand at all what it means. Do you think they *can* understand? Why, if they could, the reading of the eighth commandment every Sunday would strike them dumb with terror and shame.'

He could not forget the story of the company which he had heard in the train.

'And I've been to see Allen's mother. The poor lady told her tale of woe; her son is no richer, she says, and has no

prospect whatever before him of making any money. It is a dreadful thing to her. She looks upon these ladies as his most mischievous friends. As for his book it is only a proof and visible sign of degradation. How can a book make money, or even a bare living? Only one thing would reconcile her.'

'What thing?'

'If they were to elect Allen, Lord Mayor of London, and she were to see him in his coach of state with chaplain and sword-bearer.'

'Poor Mrs. Engledew! And the rest, Will?'

'I found Sir Charles as well as ever. He flourished about Olinthus, of course, and regrets that he is not likely to live long enough to see his failure. This, he says, is sure to be colossal. He also expressed his hope that I had brought back from China the true spirit of British enterprise, for which my father is so distinguished.'

'Oh, Will! but you know——'

'Yes, Claire, I know.' His face fell. 'I know, and I am ashamed. My father, at the age of sixty-five, has gone back to the City with that old donkey Skantlebury, and is gambling, with nothing to lose, and no chance of getting any scraps of information, except what Tommy throws him. I am ashamed, I say, when I think of those two old men going one after the other and humbly begging for advice and instructions.'

'Will,' I cried, 'please tell your father to take no more advice from him. No, it is not on account of the shame, but the danger. Tell him at once.'

'I have no influence with him. I have tried to represent the danger to him, but he has made a little money by his transactions, and is full of his former ardour for making a fortune. The old projects are brought out; the money he is to make by his new speculations is to be applied to the revival of the old. I am an unnatural son because I will advance no money to push off the scheme at once.'

'Then the end is certain,' I said, thinking of what I knew.

'I suppose it is very certain,' he replied, from his own knowledge. 'And there will be the glory of a second bankruptcy in which there will be nothing to lose.'

'And now tell me if you think my father much altered.'

'Nothing will ever alter him,' said Will. 'You know that I was not his favourite pupil. Therefore, I have not disappointed him, as Allen has. He expected nothing from me.'

'Yes; and yet, it was but a dream—an impossible dream.'

'Impossible—perhaps. But a noble dream. Do you know, Claire, that the things he put into our heads, the things he made us see and hear, have always been with me? So they have with Allen. I see in every one of his stories the presence of these ideas. I am not clever in his way. I cannot create a figure and make her represent a multitude. Where Allen sees

one girl, I see half a million. Where he sees one couple I see a million. And I have been thinking about them ever since.'

'I know you have, Will. I found you out from your letters. Does my father know too?'

'I do not suppose he does. How should he know?'

'He reads all your letters, Will.' But it occurred to me that he had not perhaps read them so carefully as I had done, and I was confused.

'He seems happier in being rich,' Will said. 'This house and his large garden are more pleasant to him than the little cottage. He is proud of his library, and it pleases him to have no work, especially no distasteful work, to do. I think Frenchmen become idle more gracefully than we restless Englishmen. Look at my father and Skantlebury.'

In the evening we had a great talk. It began with Gertrude, who could see the artistic merit of a picture or a romance whatever the subject, but had, I think, little sympathy with the inartistic and ignorant multitude who get through their lives somehow with so little joy. Perhaps she was too old for the sentiment of sympathy, which seems to me quite a modern thing in England and an importation from France, who is the mother of all ideas. She was speaking of the separation from the ordinary world which belongs to the literary and artistic life. 'What,' she said, 'is to other people the earnest business of a life is to the literary and artistic life only a curious subject of study. This is the reason why such men are bad at business. They look on from the outside and draw their pictures. If they have to go into the fight they get struck down and come off badly. Their work is outside.'

'Yet,' said Will, with diffidence, 'they cannot cease to be human. Art without sympathy is like a picture without atmosphere.'

'It is well said,' observed my father.

'The sympathy,' said Isabel, 'comes from the real humanity of the artist. He would not, if he could, cease to be human.'

'How can a man,' said Will, 'look on without longing to engage in the struggle? We are fighting animals.'

'You are not an artist, Mr. Massey,' said Gertrude. 'The artist is not a fighting man. He wants an atmosphere of calm——'

'Yet Benvenuto Cellini——' Will interrupted.

'You cannot,' Gertrude went on, 'act as well as observe and meditate. The artist must keep a steady hand and a clear eye. He must be superior to the ignoble struggles and ambitions of the common life.'

These were the ideas in which the dear lady had been brought up. A poet or an artist was a sacred creature who watched the movements of mankind, but had no part in them.

Allen murmured approval. Will knocked the proposition all to pieces.

'A great many poets and writers,' he said, 'have been men of action, and even excellent men of business. Shakespeare, for instance: Lamartine tried statesmanship; Cervantes was a soldier; Byron, Pope, and Dryden were all able to look after their own affairs. And, then, why should not a man join in the ambitions of other men?'

'Because it is so much more noble to look on than to struggle in the ignoble fight,' said Allen grandly.

'I don't know that. But even if it were, I do not see that the fight is ignoble. The people work to keep wife and children. Work therefore means love, which is not ignoble. The first desire is to improve the material condition. That is not ignoble. There is not much art among the mob it is true, and no desire for art. Art is imitation and representation, and means some kind of ease. As for the people I think that the spectacle of the whole world from the very beginning, looking for some one who will tell them how equal justice may be had, is not ignoble.'

'There spoke my pupil,' said my father. But Gertrude shook her head.

'We live in a land where there *is* equal justice,' she said. Indeed she had always been told so, and was now too old to learn anything different.

'You should ask the better-class workman what he thinks about equal justice,' said Will. 'You remember the old walks and talks, Allen.'

'Oh! yes,' Allen replied, going without a blush straight over to the opposite side. 'I remember, of course I remember now. The people are always asking how things are to be set right. There are a thousand wrongs of which we feel hardly any, and they feel all. I had forgotten. Do you remember, Will, the shoemaker we met one Sunday afternoon at Walthamstow, and how he spoke of rich men's law and poor men's law? I should have gone with him and learned how he lived. We miss our best chances. He was a splendid subject and I let him go.'

'But—ignoble, Allen?'

'No, not ignoble; I was wrong. The life of the man who works is not ignoble. The ignoble life begins a little higher up—or lower down—with the small trader.'

'Allen does well,' said Gertrude, 'to study the common people. They are splendid material for him; they are his workshop. As for me, I find them coarse in manner and rough in speech. I prefer my own kind.'

'Allen might have done better for himself,' said Will, 'if he had studied the people a little longer. He observed and made pictures. I suppose, Allen'—he laid his hand on Allen's shoulder, the familiar trick—'I suppose that nature made you

an artist, so that you see picturesque situations where I saw only things ugly and mean. Perhaps the more you study the people the more picturesque things you will see. Let us begin the old walks again.'

'We will,' said Allen; 'we will have a thousand walks together. I shall get new ideas just as I used to get them when we were boys together, and every walk brought a flood of thoughts.'

'There are two ways,' Will went on, 'of watching things. One is, yours, to study the effect; the other is, perhaps, mine, to look for the cause.'

'After all,' said my father, 'it was Will who learned my lesson aright. Then my life has not been thrown away.'

'Yes,' Will went on, 'I have not Allen's genius: but still I have ambitions. I do not know yet how I shall begin or what may be attempted. When one lives abroad, far away from the things which at home distract the thoughts, one can sit down and think. Then the memory of our old walks and talks came back, and I began to wonder if it was possible to find out a way.'

'Always for the people?' my father asked.

'Always for the people. It may be that I have found out some of their wants. I do not say; only I hope that I have found something.'

'He hopes,' repeated my father. 'It is modestly said. For he who leads the people must not expect to be taught by the people, because the people have no voice or power of speech but wait for him who can speak for them. Yet, my son, he who works for the people must trust the people.'

'There is nothing else to trust,' Will replied. 'Everything else has been tried and has broken down. If this, too, fails, there will be no more hope. Trust them? Why, is there not the safety of that divine instinct in their hearts which cries continually for justice?'

'Will,'—my father sprang to his feet and caught his pupil by both hands,—'you, too, have heard it. Listen!'—he held up his finger. 'You too can hear it. It is the breaking of the wave which will overwhelm the world.'

'Oh!' said Gertrude half-laughing, half in complaint. 'Then there will be no stalls, but all pit; no half-crown days, but all shilling days; no beautiful books, but all cheap literature; no place at all, my poor Allen, for you and me!'

CHAPTER X.

JOHN STEPHENS.

I was walking across the green in the morning on some household business, when I saw in the lane, where stood Mrs. Engledew's cottage, the strange man of whom I have already spoken. He was a long way off, but my eyes were good. Besides it was impossible to mistake his broad felt hat and his great beard. He was sitting on a rail as usual, and had a cigar in his mouth.

I went on to the shop without thinking much about the man. On my way back, seeing him still sitting there and in an attitude so observant, I reflected that it was a favourable opportunity, now that Allen was at home, to ask him why he came there and what he wanted.

He did not hear my step until I was quite close to him. When he saw me he made as if he would get down and walk away. But when I spoke to him he put his hands in his pockets and remained sitting on the rail.

'This is the fourth time,' I said, 'that I have seen you watching Mrs. Engledew's house. What do you want with her? Why do you perpetually sit and look at her door?'

'The party,' he replied, without looking me in the face, 'who takes an interest in the lady has sent me to inquire.'

'To inquire what? To sit on a gate all day and look at the house?'

'I told you about that party,' he replied, 'at the beginning.'

'What can you learn by looking at the house? Why do you not go and see her for yourself? What do you mean?'

He said that by standing where he was, he could see very well, and sometimes the lady sat working at the window, and sometimes she came out into the garden. Very well indeed he could see her. That was what he did for the party who took an interest in the lady. The manner of the man was rough but not offensive. He did not seem to resent my questions.

'But why do you not go and tell her of this person who takes an interest in her?'

'Because,' he replied, 'there are reasons. If this person knows that the lady is comfortably off and wants for nothing and that she is happy—that is, as happy as most people can expect to be at her time of life, and widows of bankrupts and all—that person is satisfied. If she was hard up now——'

'Who is the person, then? Who can be the man who sends a stranger to hang about the house and ask questions of the people? Mrs. Engledew's cousins and relations do not hide themselves. Your employer must have some good reason for hiding himself.'

'Perhaps he has,' the man laughed, a low chuckle without any mirth in it. 'Perhaps he has excellent reasons. Oh! yes, he doesn't want to show at all.'

'The only man who can have such reasons is her husband's late partner, the wicked wretch who stole his money and ruined his credit—and murdered him.'

'Which he certainly did, Amen. Of course you mean Stephens, John Stephens, Stephens is the man,' his voice became husky, 'who stole and spent and ruined all. If it had not been for Stephens, her husband would have been a rich man this day. If it had not been for him, all this grief would never have been. As for me I always say that John Stephens is nothing better than a murderer. Very good reasons why Stephens should keep out of the way; murderers must lie snug. He was a forger, too, and it might be proved after all these years—forgers must sit in the dark; he falsified the accounts; he stole the money; he ran away with all that was left. Thieves, embezzlers, falsifiers, and such must at all times lay low, mustn't they? You bet, John Stephens has got very good reasons.'

'Then you are employed by this man?'

'Put it, if you like, that I am. Put it this way, young lady. You say to yourself this. If Stephens has got money, it's Stephens's bounden duty, being a forger and a thief, to give that money up. But if the lady doesn't want the money and Stephens does, why give up that money? Why give it up? What's the good of giving it up? It won't bring back the past; it won't prevent Engledew being bankrupt. It won't prevent him—look here, young lady, John Stephens couldn't know he would kill himself. Now, could he?'

I suppose it was just then that I began to suspect who the man might be. I remembered, too, the strange knowledge he had shown of Mrs. Engledew's early appearance. He went on talking in an incoherent way, repeating himself as if his mind was oppressed.

'Stephens, you see, young lady, considering all things, does well to lay low. But perhaps you are quite right. Very likely it may be John Stephens himself—no other—who put me on this job.'

I was quite certain now that it was Stephens. What could he want with the poor lady? 'You may tell him, then,' I said, 'that he has ruined two lives and done his best to ruin a third. Good heavens! that such a wretch should live!'

'It is no use telling him what he knows. As for his living with the knowledge of *that* behind him he thinks he'd better go on living as long as he can.'

He got down from his gate, when he had made this grim reply, and leaned against it, with his hands in his pockets, as if he was disposed to carry on the conversation as long as I pleased.

'Does he repent then, this man?' I asked. 'You know him well; that is clear. Does he repent?'

'As for repentance, now, that is according as you read the word. Stephens is sorry—he is always sorry that he did it. Sometimes he gets mad just in thinking about it. But as for repentance, young lady, when I was young I used to go to church. When I think of that I laugh. I just laugh. Now repentance in church meant being sorry and hoping for forgiveness. I don't think Stephens ever thought, even when he was as mad as a hatter, that anybody would forgive him.'

'I see. But he is sorry?'

'That is so. It is close upon five-and-twenty years since he did it. What he claims is this, though perhaps you won't believe it: most every night for all these years he has seen the face of the man he murdered—yes—murdered. And it looks upon him with anger. Sometimes, too, there comes the face of his wife; but not so often.'

He stopped, looking before him as if he saw that face still.

'It does one good to talk to some one. I've talked to no one since—well—a long time. Nobody to talk to—that is the very devil. Then you get to see faces and to hear voices; when the voices go on too long people take and lock a man up, and say he's gone off his chump for a spell.'

He stopped again.

'Five-and-twenty years at three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. That makes about nine thousand ghosts; doesn't it?' The man ticked off the amount on his fingers as if he was adding up an account. 'Nine thousand one hundred and twenty-five ghosts it is exactly. I counted up this morning. Wherever Stephens goes the face goes too. Every night when he blows his candle out the face comes back. If he leaves the candle alight, the face gets between him and the candle. You can't dodge a ghost, anyhow, if you try all the time. Stephens has tried going to bed drunk—but that's no good, bless you! and sitting up all night, but that is no good either. Always that face; sometimes, that other face. There's a curious thing about the other face. Before Carry lost her husband she was as pretty a woman as you wished to see. You would have thought that Stephens would have seen that pretty face. Not at all. What he sees is a sharp and worn face—see there.'

I looked. The widow at the moment threw open the window and looked out into the sunshine. I thought that, set as the face seemed in sunlight, flowers, and bright leaves, it ought to have been a happy face, contented with fortune and glad to live. A foolish thought.

'That is the face he has always seen, growing older and thinner too. Strange, isn't it?'

'Very strange—go on.'

'There are lots more things as strange as you ever heard.

When Stephens bolted there was very little money left for him to take because he had lost it all. But what there was he took—say, two hundred pounds; not more; and he went to America by a French steamer from Havre. You would think that such a man would spend a couple of hundred in no time. Well, he did: some of it he gambled; some of it he drank; some of it he fooled; he kept on throwing it away. Yet, as fast as he threw away, the money came back to him. Never any more. Then, what with the faces at night and the voices, and the way in which that money behaved just as if it meant to remain with him, Stephens's head got a little queer and they locked him up. I think he was locked up for twenty years or thereabouts. When he came out they gave him back his two hundred pounds. And that money has stuck to him and grown more. Yes, it's now just exactly enough to pay back all, at compound interest. Seems strange, doesn't it?'

'Very strange.'

'He has been working and saving; and it occurred to him that if he were to go and get rid of this money by giving it back to Carry, he might get rid of the faces, too.'

'Very likely he would.'

The man pulled a bit of paper with figures on it from his pocket, and he looked at it.

'If you write out that sum at three and a half per cent. interest, which is a fair rate, you will find that two hundred pounds in twenty-five years becomes five hundred and thirty pounds, two shillings and a penny. I've worked it out, though it's a longish sum. The dollars came in then, and Stephens put them away till they had got up to what he wanted.'

'Why did he not send the money over?'

'No; that wouldn't do. He must bring it himself.'

'And so, Mr. Stephens,' I said, 'you have got the money in your pocket now?'

He made no reply, and seemed not at all surprised that I knew him.

'Why do you not go and give it to her?'

'It is always in my pocket. If she was poor——'

'Come with me and give it to her.'

'To-morrow I will go. I can stand one night more. To-morrow.'

'No; come to-day.'

'It is all I have got in the world,' he replied with a strange eagerness. 'All I have in the world. She does not want it. The money would make her no happier. She lives in a beautiful little cottage covered with flowers. Why should I make myself a beggar? The past is gone; it can't be brought back.'

'You owe her the money—come with me.'

I took him by the hand, but he pushed me back and turned to walk away. In another moment he would have gone, but

just then I heard steps on the road. Thank heaven, it was Allen.

'Stop,' I said. 'Do you know that young man? It is Allen Engledew—her son.'

He made no more hesitation. He stood still until Allen reached us.

'Allen,' I said, 'this man wishes to see your mother. Will you come with us? He has an important thing to say.'

'Who is he?' Allen asked. 'Who are you, and what do you want with my mother?'

'You have got her face,' Stephens replied.

No more was said. We walked down the lane, the man between us like a criminal, and entered the cottage, the door of which was open. The widow looked up surprised.

'Mother,' said Allen, 'this stranger wishes to make some communication to you.'

'First,' I said, 'let him pull off his spectacles and his hat.'

He took them off, without a word, looking with strange and curious eyes at Mrs. Engledew. Suddenly she recognised him and sprang to her feet and seized him by the collar, crying,

'It is the robber and the forger! It is John Stephens.'

'It is,' he replied, quietly. 'You have not forgotten me.'

'Allen, hold him tight. Do not let him escape, while I run for the police. Claire, you are younger, do you run, my child. Allen and I will hold him.'

'Stay, mother,' said Allen, gently taking her hand from the man's coat-collar, 'let us hear first what he has to say.'

'He is the forger and the thief, Allen, do I not tell you? Quick, villain, say what you please, and then the police. Oh! At last, at last!'

'I carried off,' said Stephens, apparently unmoved, 'a couple of hundred pounds. Here it is.' He lugged out of his pocket a little bag with bank notes and gold in it. 'The debt has been mounting at compound interest. Now it has come to 530*l.* 2*s.* 1*d.* Count it, you will find it correct.'

'The money, Allen,' said the widow, coldly, 'can be placed in the hands of the Court. It is, I suppose, evidence of confession.'

'Have you anything more to say?' asked Allen.

'Well, yes, I should like to say in your presence, young gentleman, that it is all true. I am everything that your mother says. If it had not been for me, your father would have become rich and lived long; your mother would have been a contented and happy woman; you, well, I don't know much about you. If you like I will go to prison. Prison or mad-house makes very little odds. That won't give you back your father. If it is any satisfaction to you I will confess and give no trouble to anybody and work out my sentence.'

He addressed Allen, but he spoke to the woman whom he had wronged. He could not take his eyes from her.

'Carry,' he added, 'I say that nothing can ever restore what has been destroyed. Do you think that the man who has done the mischief has ever been happy, either, for a single day?'

'Allen,' said his mother, 'we waste time. Let us rid ourselves of this monster. Let him be locked up.'

'You have suffered through my doing,' he went on, not as if pleading for pardon but as stating a plain fact. 'I have suffered through my own. Which do you think has been the more miserable?'

'Allen,' she repeated. 'Quick, let him go with you to the police office. If he attempts to escape, knock him down—kill him. I will get you, if you like, your father's gold-headed stick.'

'I will go with your son if he wishes. I will not try to escape. Why should I? I have seen you. I have given you the money. I have told you what I came to say. What matter for the rest?'

Allen gave him his hat and pointed to the door.

'Go,' he said, 'you are free. Mother, tell him that you forgive him. We are Christians, mother. Forgive him. We must all forgive.'

'I cannot,' she cried, bursting into tears. 'Oh! Allen, I cannot, I cannot. The sight of him makes me remember all—how happy I should have been. It is easy for you to say forgive; but you never knew your father, Allen. There was no one like him in all the city, no one. Forgive this man? Why I have cursed him every day since he ran away.'

'I have been cursed,' the man said. 'I have had nothing but bad luck. I've been in prison for what another man did. I have had agues and fevers and pains. I have been in a madhouse most all the time——'

'Forgive him, mother,' said Allen. 'Forgive him. Let him go.'

'Say it for me, then, Allen. I cannot say that I forgive him.'

'My mother freely and fully forgives you,' said Allen. 'I forgive you as well; you can go. As for the money, you had better take it with you. We do not want it.'

The man shook his head. He would not have the money, he said. Then he turned to the widow, 'Do you mean it, Carry?' he said. 'Do you mean it, from your heart.'

She made no reply.

'Carry!' the man held out his hands in a helpless way. 'Carry, I don't know what I shall do or where I shall go. I think my life is ended. But I have given back the money. That is done. The faces will go now, perhaps, and the voices.

If ever you think of me again, Carry, try to think of me as in the old, old days, before I became—what I am. Yes, I will go.' He turned to go, hesitated, turned again, and threw himself at the feet of the woman he had wronged with a cry,

'Carry—Carry—oh! Carry. We were boys and girls together. I used to love you . . . . I have ruined you . . . . forgive me.'

She put out her hand; he touched it with his lips, rose and left the house. Then I went, too, leaving Allen alone with his mother.

CHAPTER XI.

A GLORIOUS FAILURE.

The storm broke upon poor Olinthus sooner than he expected. But as there was no escaping from it, the sooner it fell the better.

The first sign of the coming disturbance which came to us was in an excited and noisy meeting of the village Parliament upon the Green. There were gathered together, Sir Charles, Mr. Massey, and Mr. Skantlebury. My father was with them too, though he took no part in the talk.

'As for me,' cried Mr. Skantlebury, waving his arms, 'I will have justice, if there is justice to be had I will have it—Gallaway or no Gallaway. What? Do you think I am going to sit down and be robbed?'

'Patience, Skantlebury,' said Sir Charles. 'You don't know yet that you have lost your money. The shares may go up again.'

'Never; they never can. I knew from the first that it was a hollow thing,' said the victim.

'Then what did you buy the shares for?' Sir Charles asked.

'I bought them to sell, of course. He told me to; he said he held twenty thousand; but we will have justice.'

'In this country everybody can get justice,' said the ex-Lord Mayor. 'I have myself sat on the bench, and I ought to know. Fine with costs, or imprisonment in case you can't pay. I have meted out with impartiality to all alike—rich and poor. The rich pay up, and the poor go to prison. This is the country for justice, Skantlebury, so long as a Lord Mayor sits to administrate it.'

'It was Gallaway who started the company—that shall be proved. It was Gallaway who wrote the prospectus—that shall be proved; he dictated it, and we have got the boy who took it down in shorthand. We will make him give back the money in full.'

'How much will it be, do you think, Massey?' asked Sir Charles.

'Fifty thousand shares at five pounds each. One pound on deposit, one pound ten on allotment, the rest at call. But the directors confidently anticipated——'

'I asked for two thousand shares; I sent up two thousand pounds; they allotted all; I sent up three thousand more. If I could get the money back. I've lost five thousand. Oh! it's hard; it's a dreadful hard thing, after working and slaving, to think that it may be gone. Five thousand pounds!'

His voice rose to a shriek, and he threw up his hands in a kind of bewilderment. He could not understand how the money he had so slowly accumulated should melt away so suddenly. 'He told me to buy the shares; he said he had twenty thousand; he told me to hold on, and I held; and they went up, and I might have sold; and where are they now? At nothing—anything—you can't sell them; nobody will buy; they won't even speculate with 'em. And he's sold all he had, and I've lost my money.'

'But you've got some money left, Skantlebury?' said Sir Charles anxiously. 'You wouldn't, surely, fail for so pitiful a sum as five thousand? Why, think of the discredit you would bring upon the village.'

Mr. Skantlebury turned away with an angry gesture.

'It really would be nothing short of disgrace to all of us,' Sir Charles went on. 'And you, Massey, are you hard hit too?'

'I took up all I could afford,' replied the sanguine speculator. 'But, Lord! it's nothing. Gallaway's a man of a million. A man of his resource is equal to anything. If we lose our money, he will make it up to us, only Skantlebury has no faith. And suppose they bring it home to him—what is it? Fifty thousand, we will say, allotted at two pound ten. It is not much more than a hundred thousand after all. Gallaway can meet the bill and laugh.'

'Some of them sold at a premium though,' said Sir Charles. 'I dare say it would run up to a hundred and thirty thousand. That would be a very creditable failure.'

'Don't,' groaned Mr. Skantlebury, 'don't, Sir Charles. Please don't speak of failure. You heard what they said at the meeting, Massey.'

There had been an excited meeting of the unhappy shareholders, nearly all of whom, I believe, were in the same position as Mr. Skantlebury: that is to say, they held shares in the hope of selling at a premium, and not with any belief in the company or the soundness of the scheme. One of the victims made a very strong speech, charging Mr. Gallaway with dreadful things, and especially with fraud, robbery, and dishonest representations. Of course the unhappy Olinthus was legally

responsible and guilty of everything, and only I knew how he had done nothing except at the dictation of his partner, who was now furnishing a great house with the proceeds of his three years' plunder. The speaker, who was a clergyman, the very clergyman of whom I had heard, certainly showed a most astonishing energy and vigour in action as well as in speech. It was he who had traced this prospectus to the office ; who had got hold of the hand which wrote it out at Olinthus's dictation, and it was by his exertions that the great promoter, wire-puller, financier, and operator could be made responsible for statements by which people had been robbed of thousands. He had got the opinion of counsel ; Mr. Gallaway was, that opinion stated, legally responsible ; a test action could be brought ; if that was successful he might be made to disgorge all.

'And I make no doubt, Skantlebury,' said Mr. Massey cheerfully, 'that he will have to pay up. But what is it ? Say a hundred thousand. Very good ; do you suppose that Gallaway is not worth a good deal more than that ? Why, they say he lives in simple chambers ; he's got neither wife nor child ; he can't spend more than a thousand a year ; and he has been making money hand over hand—hundreds of thousands. Keep up your courage, Skantlebury ; you shall get your money paid back.'

My father told me all this, and how they fortified each other's opinion, though Mr Massey, strong in his belief, pointed out that action or no action, young Gallaway would certainly see them through. Alas ! what would be their despair when they knew what I already knew ?

'Nobody knows,' said Mr. Massey, 'the money that young man has made. A temporary check : that is what it is. Consider, Skantlebury, three years of such success as the world has never seen.'

'Ah !' said Mr. Skantlebury.

'Did he ever tell you what he lost ?' asked Sir Charles.

'I don't believe he ever lost anything. All he touched turned to gold. There never was and there never will be a man in the City to compare with him.'

'Not Colliber ? his failure was a quarter of a million.'

'Not even Colliber,' said Mr. Massey. 'When I think of the companies he has floated. Why, between ourselves, don't we know that he wrote all the prospectuses himself, got the directors, and floated the shares, all by himself ? And has any one of those companies ever paid any dividend ; or, will one of them pay a dividend ? Come, Sir Charles, as an old City man you know that.'

'If all the shareholders,' said Sir Charles, thoughtfully, 'were to bring home all those prospectuses against him, they might make him a bankrupt for millions ! And only five-and-twenty ! ! For millions ! ! ! What an honour, what a guide and

example for the young people of the village! what a joy to his widowed mother! Glorious! Glorious, indeed!'

He rubbed his hands and chuckled, but Mr. Skantlebury shuddered.

And now I must anticipate, because the circumstances of Olinthus's fall belong to a somewhat later time.

The case created a very great interest. There were reports and rumours in the City—which, so far as a woman can learn, seems as much given to gossip as a country town; some said that Gallaway would be tried by the Public Prosecutor, others that he would get clear off, and float dozens more companies; some said that he would have to go bankrupt, and others that he could face half-a-dozen storms such as these. Some said that he would be put into the box, when extraordinary revelations would be forced from his reluctant lips; and others, that he would square the action, and that nothing more would be heard of it. But the clergyman was conscientious; he had a public duty to perform, and he did it.

On the day—the appointed day—when Olinthus should have come with the other two, he did not appear, but he sent me a letter. He said in it, first, that I was to consider his communication as strictly private, confidential, and privileged. The game, in fact, was now up, and it only remained to get out of the mess as comfortably as possible. Since his partner had deserted him he had been speculating heavily, but somehow, not wisely. In short, he had lost great sums of money. Then the action would most certainly proceed, and he was hopelessly ruined. There was one gleam of comfort—the Countess, with all her brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends, had followed his advice and 'gone in,' with most disastrous results. The worst of it was the want of credit, because people would expect the estate to cut up well. In fact, they all thought him worth hundreds of thousands, and there would be, in fact, no more than enough to pay the lawyers and accountants, while as for creditors and shareholders they would have to go whistle. Yet, he added, all might yet be retrieved if Mr. Colliber would only come back; but he made no sign and answered no letters—from which we perceived that poor Tommy had been humbling himself. As for the City it would be closed to him for a good while, and, of course, under the circumstances, he should cease his financial operations. He went on to add very kindly, that he knew the tenderness of my heart, and he was quite sure that his misfortunes would make no difference at all in my feelings towards him. The ten thousand pounds which he had had the forethought to deposit with his mother would produce four hundred a year, and with what my father would give me, there would be plenty to live upon in a quiet way. Therefore, he still laid himself, as he had always promised to do, with the wreck of his fortunes at my feet, and so on, with many protestations

of earnest affection. It was a very humble letter and pitiful to read, if only for the contrast of his former talk and his strange inability to discern the infamy of his conduct, both as regards his fraudulent companies and his robbery of the ten thousand pounds.

Of course the thing was not settled in a day. The action was brought, the great Olinthus Gallaway was put in the witness-box and examined, but he had very little to say. He acknowledged that the prospectus was drawn up by himself; he admitted, in fact, that he was responsible for the formation of the company; he hoped to make a very good stroke of business out of the company; he had done his best to give the company a good shove off; he had done his best also to run up the shares; and he had done it all, he declared, on oath, in full confidence that the company was founded on the soundest possible principles, in ignorance of the damaging circumstances which afterwards came to light, and in certainty that it would succeed if managed well. They cross-examined him at great length; he had to confess all sorts of damaging things—as that he knew nothing at all concerning points about which the prospectus went into elaborate details, and had consulted nobody who did; that he accepted important statements made by interested persons without question; and that he accidentally forgot to consider one or two very important facts which he was proved to have learned. This he regretted, but confessed the fact manfully, and after all he adhered to his statement, which was, no doubt, perfectly true, that he had no reason to doubt the substantial truth of the prospectus put forth. The judge summed up dead against him: the jury had no hesitation; he lost his case; and the result was what Mr. Skantlebury predicted—that he had to take up the worthless shares on account of which the action was brought. This meant that he had to take up all the fifty thousand at the price for which they were issued, namely, two pounds ten a share. So that here was a debt of a hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds to begin with. Mr. Skantlebury came home jubilant that evening.

'We've nailed him,' he said, rubbing his hands. 'We've got him at last. A hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds he'll have to pay. They say he's worth twice that money and more.'

But when in the course of a few days it was announced that Mr. Olinthus Gallaway had suspended payment, a nervous qualm seized Mr. Skantlebury, and he only partly recovered confidence when Mr. Massey assured him that the estate would fully meet the liabilities.

'And if it doesn't,' he added, 'do you think young Gallaway will not make it good for us?'

This confidence bore Mr. Massey through another trouble. In fact, following advice given after the withdrawal of Mr.

Colliber, he had gone in for a certain stock, I forget whether it was a bull or a bear, but he came out, Sir Charles said, a lame duck—afterwards I learned the nature of the joke. As Mr. Massey's gains were all invested in the unlucky company, he had no means of meeting the day of settlement.

The broker found that he had nothing at all and that it was of no use making the man a bankrupt, so that after all Mr. Massey was no worse off after the catastrophe than before it. He returned, therefore, to the contemplation of his former projects and his lamentations over the undutiful character of his son who will advance him nothing.

Alas! when the estate came to be examined, it was found to consist of a few hundreds, which the lawyers and the accountants got together, with a great quantity of worthless scrip. Several theories were advanced to account for the wretched sum which represented the estate. One was that the bankrupt had spent his money in the most shameless extravagance and profligacy. This theory prevailed for some time till the question was asked what ground there was for supposing Mr. Gallaway to have made such immense sums. Then everybody went straight round in the opposite direction, and said, 'Oh! of course. It was all exaggeration. His transactions, after all, were not so out of the common,' and poor Tommy's reputation was quite snuffed out. I do not know how much in the pound was paid, but I am sure that it was only a few pence, and the name of Gallaway now takes the place of Colliber as a proverb and byword of execration. Most of the victims were men like Mr. Skantlebury, who had retired from business with their few thousands, the savings of a life's work, and thought four per cent. a miserable return for their money, remembering the large profits they had made in trade. It seems to me a most dreadful thing when a man like this loses his money. All his life he has been thinking of nothing else than how to save it: his only idea of success is to save a great deal: his chief hope is to retire in his old age and lead a tranquil life on the money he has saved. And then to lose it! I believe that the unfortunate Mr. Skantlebury had saved no more than seven or eight thousand pounds; enough, however, to afford him all that he wanted. Now five thousand was gone, and he was left with an income of about a hundred and fifty pounds a year. He went away: where he went to I do not know: or why he went; but we saw him no more. And then the great Bankrupt returned to his native village. His sisters refused to give back the little fortunes with which he had endowed them, and said strong things about the folly which had thrown away such splendid chances. And until they married and went away, they reproached him continually with eating the bread of idleness, and asked him why he did not go back to the City and make another fortune; and what was the use of being clever if

he did not use his cleverness ; and was it not a flying in the face of Providence to do nothing when he had shown such extraordinary power of doing anything he pleased ? I think that it was not, in those days, a happy household : the daily papers were full of articles which said most unkind things about the operations conducted by Mr. Gallaway : the system which he had so successfully pursued was laid bare, and all could see for themselves with what ease and yet with what dexterity they had been fooled : it was shown to be no new system, but one which he must have been taught by an older hand. Who was this older hand ? It was dreadful to read these things : the poor girls put the newspapers out of sight and refused to look at them. Somehow their brother did not mind so much. He cut out all the articles and preserved them in a portfolio, just as an author might cut out and preserve laudatory reviews of his last book. He read them through over and over again. He rubbed his hands over them : and when he came to any passage which acknowledged the extraordinary audacity and cleverness of the whole history, he scored this passage with a red pencil. 'You see, Claire,' he said to me, once, 'they know nothing, and they do not suspect. Colliber can't let out now, because no one would believe him. And they will go on believing in my cleverness. That's a comfort to a man, isn't it ? And nobody knows except yourself.' It is, in fact, a secret which I have kept. I am quite sure that as Olinthus grows old he will forget Mr. Colliber's part in this business altogether, and believe firmly that he alone did it all with his own wonderful brain and his own strong right hand.

He has not yet gone back to the City. I think he never will. He is perfectly idle and would be happy but for his mother's rule, which is despotic. First of all she refused to give up any part of the ten thousand pounds, saying that a man who had let a hundred thousand slip through his fingers was not to be trusted with money at all. If, she added, she had insisted on living with him all the time, she would have known how to keep the money—action or no action, there should have been nothing lost. And for a long time she incessantly demanded of him an account of the various ways in which he had contrived to waste so great a fortune. She allows him a pound a week for pocket money and dress, and makes him go to church three times every Sunday—I suppose for penance.

At first, Olinthus was visited by a good many persons who hoped to suck advantage from his wonderful knowledge. No one, I have reason to believe, has ever gone away the wiser for the interview. And to Mr. Massey's entreaties and prayers he has remained obdurate. One man, he told me, actually proposed the same kind of partnership as that which existed between himself and Mr. Colliber. This greatly pleased him, and nothing, I am sure, would delight him more than to enact

Mr. Colliber's part again, especially the last magnificent passage, the timely retirement with all the spoil in the hour of danger.

'A brilliant failure, indeed, Gallaway,' said Sir Charles, 'at your age, with the promise of your life before you, truly brilliant. Not so colossal as Colliber's, but very solid and substantial. And who knows what you may do the second time?'

'As for that, Sir Charles——,' Olinthus began.

'As for that, my dear boy; think of the leading articles in all the papers. How many young men of five-and-twenty have achieved such a reputation as your own?'

Olinthus folded his arms and frowned.

'Or ruined so many people?' added my father.

Olinthus put his hands in his pockets and smiled.

'We shall have him with us,' said the ex-Lord Mayor, regarding him with thoughtful admiration, 'for a short time only. Then we shall lose him.'

'What?' cried Olinthus, turning pale. 'Why do you think I am going to die?'

'Not die, Gallaway. Not yet for a great many years, I trust. No; but you will leave us. You will rise to greater glories. You have settled here for a little rest, like a tired eagle after a long flight. You now plume your feathers'—Olinthus agitated an elbow. 'Soon, you will soar aloft once more, and we shall gaze upon you in the clouds.'

Olinthus shook both elbows.

'If you come down again,' continued the garrulous old man, 'let it be for millions. But I shall not live to see it. I remember'—Sir Charles wiped away a tear—'I remember as if it was but yesterday, when you were but a little boy, how you said your only ambition was to make money, to become Lord Mayor, and to fail for millions. A promising lad! A bright and hopeful boy! See what you have done—and Allen after all nothing but a common writing person.'

'If the respectable Skantlebury were here,' said my father, 'he would say—deplorable!'

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRIZE OF THE GOLDEN APPLE.

So my last words, like the first, tell how a prize was won, if in truth I may call myself a prize. If Will thought I was, cannot I think so too? And if it was the heart's desire of my lover, was it not the fulness and completion of my life to me? Great as is the love of man for a woman, there is one thing which is greater, the happiness and contentment of the woman who

possesses that love. For whoso findeth love findeth life and hath obtained favour of the Lord.

On the eve of the appointed day neither of the boys came to the house. I believe that they walked away together somewhere and spent a day walking side by side in silence absolute. We passed a quiet evening: my father wrapt in a profound dejection. Isabel played to us: Gertrude and I sat side by side and whispered.

'Your mind is quite made up, my dear?' she asked.

'Quite. I see now that it could never be otherwise. Isabel will make him far, far happier than I could ever hope to do. And besides, oh! Gertrude, you will understand me. You know I love Allen as much as you do; yet—I do not know why—there would always be in my heart, if I were to marry him, the sense of something wanting.'

'And with Will?'

I could not answer. But with Will there would be nothing wanting. I know now what it is—the one thing lacking. But Gertrude knew it not. It was the helplessness of Allen's nature. He wants continually the encouragement, praise, and sympathy which a woman looks for from her husband. Without this support he would droop, and fall into melancholy and distrust.

'He is a strong man, my dear,' Gertrude whispered after a silence. 'He has great ambition, and he is clever, though not in our way. Can it be that Art is, after all, not so great a thing as administration? Yet Art will always much more fire the imagination and touch the heart. My dear, I would rather—if I were young again and beautiful—I would rather marry Allen than Will.'

I exchanged no more confidences with Isabel. We had said enough. She trusted me now, though, with a woman's doubts and fears, she could not understand that Allen could love her more than he loved me, and, for her sake, be ready to give up the hope in which he had seemed to live for three years. Now, I know not whether the words I had said to Allen awakened him to a sense of his own feeling, or whether he began to understand that he might have to live apart from the two ladies who had become necessary to his life. Certainly one could observe in him signs of doubt and trouble. These were shown in a nervous and restless manner, and in the way in which his eyes fell now on Isabel and now on myself. As if I could not read the thoughts of Allen whom I had studied so long! They were thoughts which he did not put into words. They were contrasts which he dared not face between a life with me and my father—with whom he no longer had any kind of common interest—and a life with Isabel, and Gertrude, and Art, and the followers of Art: they were reproaches—that I know full well: they were temptations to resign his pretensions: they were jealousies. But

the time was come and the thing, with all its consequences, was before him. Like the girl with the thistle-down he might have tried his fortune, saying, 'I love her—love her not.'

When the others were gone to bed, I went into the garden, where my father was walking backwards and forwards alone. He threw away his cigarette and drew me into his arms and kissed me twice.

'My daughter,' he said, 'my dear daughter—my best of daughters—it is the last time. To-morrow, your cheek, and your lips, and your forehead, and your hand will belong to one of the boys. One of the boys! I hoped it, always. Yet, now—you will go away—this house will be empty—there will be no more sunshine in it, no more music, no more laughter. What am I to do, my child, when you are gone?'

'But, *mon père*, I am not going to leave you.'

'You must, Claire. Between Allen and myself there is no more confidence. We are not *sympathiques*. I know it not, his world of art.'

'But oh! *mon père*, suppose I do not—suppose it is not—Allen after all.'

He held me at arm's length and looked into my face as if he could read my secret there; yet we were standing in the shadow of a cherry-tree, and it was past ten o'clock and a cloudy night.

'Claire,' he whispered, 'you will give up the boy of books?'

'Yes.'

'Remember, he is a poet—he is a *romancier*—he writes things which make people cry. To be his wife is to be the wife of a great man, as people think——'

'It is not Allen,' I replied.

'Then it is Will.'

He kissed me again, and then began to talk in his old, quick, impatient way.

'*Quoi donc?* I am stupid. I grow old. I have no more eyes than a pig. You love not Allen, yet he is a poet. One thinks that a poet makes all girls to fall in love with him. He captures hearts. Yes, he is clever. He has a quick eye, and he knows words. He is of the first force in words. He is a maker of phrases, like Malherbe. For me, the maker of phrases is not the great man. I love better the man who acts than the man who talks. And I thought he had your heart. *Que je suis bête.* For you are my daughter. Then comes—the other. Yes, the other. Ah! I did not know him. I thought he was stupid—an English boy with a brain of beer—a boy for the shop. But he is not stupid—not stupid at all. He remembers what I have taught him. He knows things; he is wise; he is not afraid. And—yes—it is where the English are better than the French—he is good. My daughter, if Will, this young Prince

from China, gives you his word, it will be true *parole d'honneur*. You will not have cause for jealousy. What do I say? It is not in England that wives are jealous of their husbands. This young man is like the Chevalier Bayard for honour It is strange. His father is a fool, who would be a rogue, like the Honourable Gallaway, if he were not so great a fool. Perhaps it is his mother who is wise. Perhaps the example of his father has driven the boy into wisdom. He is *gentilhomme*. Everybody is gentleman now, but everybody is not *gentilhomme*. But I have one fear, my daughter. Yes, one anxiety tears my heart. I fear, Claire, that he will become rich. It is an instinct with the English; they are the only people who can grow rich without cheating and stealing and lying. It is a great virtue with them. Will, no doubt, must become rich. Well, no man is without faults. We must forgive him, and pretend that we are poor.'

'We have enough,' I said, 'if he does not. Why, we are quite rich ourselves.'

'We have enough,' he repeated gravely. 'Thanks to the good brother, who also became rich, with his vast Beddery. I find that I made a mistake. You were always right—can Woman ever be wrong? I thought that because a boy was fond of books and open to ideas I could make of Allen a great man. It is of such stuff that artists are made. Boys who become great men must have the clear head and the brave heart. Kiss me again, my daughter. In your marriage, as well as in all your life before, you will make your father happy.'

And so the morning came at last. But I no longer felt any trouble or anxiety, except that kind of fear with which one meets new happiness. It is as if no joy was to be granted to men and women without some pains which shall go before. This is part of the mystery of life; it begins, so joyful and happy a thing as it is for some, with helplessness and pain: it ends, so joyful a resurrection awaiting us, with helplessness and pain. There is no happiness in it which is not preceded by suffering. So, to me, the contemplation and thought of this great gift of a man's whole heart and soul, the endowment of his brain and his labour, the honour of his honour, the joy of his joy, the pain of his pain, the faith in his faith, filled my heart with a tumult of fear and shame as of my own unworthiness. Is that not a strange thing that we should ardently desire the best things that heaven can give, yet should feel, when they are granted, so unworthy to possess them?

The boys would come, I was sure, to the Forest in the evening, to the place where we parted, and at the time. But there were many things to be said, first, to Allen. In the afternoon I sent him a note, begging him to come and see me in my own room. He came at once. He was very pale, and trembled, and his eyes were downcast. These were signs of a guilty conscience

and made me rejoice. My task would be the easier; yet it was not very easy. It is always hard to explain when one is on the brink of a great mistake. First, I begged him to consider again the very great difference there was between the Allen of to-day and the Allen of three years ago: how he had made new friends and got into new lines of thought; how the old ways, mine still, were no longer his; how I was hardly able to understand and appreciate his life, so that my counsel would no longer be of use to him, nor my sympathy intelligent, and how as his wife, I should only be a hindrance and an encumbrance to him.

'No, no,' he said hoarsely, 'never an encumbrance, Claire.'

'In the old days when we were both ignorant together, Allen, you could come to me and could tell me of what you were doing and I could encourage you. That is no longer possible unless you are satisfied with my saying, "Well done, Allen," when you succeed, and "poor Allen," when you fail.'

'But I have loved you always, Claire,' he said.

So he had, I knew that, and he loved me still in exactly the same way and as much as he had ever loved me. I told him so.

'And what has Will done, then?' he asked, stung with a momentary pang of jealousy. There was no need to answer that question.

'You must marry, Allen,' I said, 'when you find a woman who has become a part of your daily life—the daily life that you desire most: who will enter into your thoughts, and understand your work, the manner and meaning and *technique* of it. The woman who will make you happy, Allen, must be like yourself, an artist. I desire only the practical and real world.'

He changed colour but made no reply.

'In your world,' I went on, 'you and your friends are happiest when they live apart from the rest of us. They regard everything from another point of view. Your wife must be one of them. Allen, let me save you from disappointment and unhappiness.'

He had been sitting at the table, his head upon his hand. He sprang to his feet, crying—

'Claire, your way would become my way, or else mine should become yours. Unhappiness? With you? Claire, let what you have said be as if it never had been said. Let me remember the hopes of three years ago.'

'Oh, Allen! ask your heart again. It is not a question of consistency. How could you know three years ago? I told you long ago to think well what you would do?'

He made no reply but he sat down again.

'You must not bring your wife a divided love, Allen. You must not leave a door open for regret and repentance. You must never be able to say, "Had I not married her—but the

other—all would have been well with me." Have you considered?'

Still he made no reply. He was of so truthful a nature that his silence replied for him.

'My poor Allen!' I gave him my hand. 'I have never loved you otherwise, or more, than I love you now. I think I could never have married you, even if there had been no Will in the case at all. I have loved you so long that I have watched every one of your moods. I know you so well that I think I can read your thoughts.'

'Read them now,' he said, with down-dropped eyes. 'Read them, Claire, so that I need not speak.'

'You think that the offer of three years ago binds you to me in honour—it does not, Allen, it never did. You think that it is shameful to come to me and say, "Claire, I love you as much as I always did; but I love another woman more." It is not shameful, Allen. You think that in honour you are bound to endeavour to make one woman miserable though you cannot make the other woman happy. You must think so no longer. Have I read your thoughts, Allen?'

'Forgive me, Claire, you have.' He bowed his head as he replied almost in a whisper.

'There is nothing to forgive, dear Allen. Kiss me and tell me what you please about it. You know you always used to tell me all.'

He kissed my hand—the foolish, soft-hearted boy. He let a tear fall upon it.

'Who could help loving you always? Oh! Claire, I am, indeed, not worthy of you.'

'Tell me about it, Allen. I want to have your confidence in this as in all other things.'

'They were so kind to me, both of them. We used to talk together about you, Claire.'

'But you talk about me no longer, do you?'

'No, we talk very little to each other. A constraint has grown up between us, now; it is because I have found out—yes, Claire, you have always had my secret thoughts—I have found that I love her. She is always in my mind night and day.

'I have seen it, Allen. And I? Am I never in your mind?'

'It is strange; you are with me as much as you ever were. You are a part of myself. If I think of Isabel it is as if I ought to go straight to you and tell my thought.'

'That is not strange at all. It proves only that you love me just as you always have done. You shall make her happy, Allen. Go, I refuse your offer, sir, I cannot marry you.'

I made him as grand a courtesy as I knew, one of those magnificent sweeping reverences which ladies make on the stage,

after they have first thoughtfully swept their trains out of the way.

'Are you content, my dear old playfellow?'

'Could I ever have thought,' said Allen, his face like a boy's face still for smiles and tears, 'could I ever have believed that the day would arrive when you would make me happy by refusing to marry me?'

'You foolish boy! oh, Allen, I love you so much that I am jealous for your happiness. But Isabel loves you more because she will make you happy. Go and find her; she is somewhere in the house or garden. Go, Allen, take her, too, into your confidence.'

He stooped again and kissed my fingers.

'There is no one—there never will be any one—like you, Claire. And now that I have made you cry. Forgive me.'

So he left me. Presently I joined Gertrude, who was in the drawing-room.

'Gertrude,' I said, 'congratulate me. I have made a man happy.'

'Which one? Oh! Claire, my dear Claire, which is it?'

'It is Allen,' I replied.

Her face showed her disappointment.

'I must go to congratulate him,' she said slowly. 'After all, what chance had poor Will against our poet? I knew how it must end.'

'None,' I said; 'I sincerely hope and pray she will accept him.'

'Claire!' she caught me by both hands. 'Tell me at once, you wicked woman; I am so anxious, and you are laughing at me.'

'I have made Allen happy—by refusing him. He has gone to find Isabel. Poor Will! I think he will indeed have a poor chance against our poet.'

'Kiss me, my dear, you are a dear, delightful, beautiful, kind-hearted girl. Are you quite, quite sure, my dear, that you do not love Allen?'

I whispered, because although no one was in the room, there are some things which must not be said aloud.

'Gertrude, I found out, three days ago, that there is only one man in all the world for me; and I am going now to tell him so.'

She threw her kindly arms round my neck and prayed that I might be happy. This dear lady had spent her life in writing love stories—think of that—her whole life without any love story of her own, and yet her heart was as fresh as when she first began, and her interest as strong in every pair of lovers. This is what comes of the dreaming life. Perhaps it is the best.

I went, with beating heart, to the old trysting-place beside the fallen tree in the Forest. No girl ever had a sweeter

evening or a more delightful retreat to hear the tale of love. And yet no tale of love was poured into my ears at all. To be sure I did not want it at the time, but afterwards it seemed as if something should have been said. It is too bad to take a poor girl's heart by storm. Will was before me. Of course I knew he would be; and he came to meet me. Oh, the impatient boy! He could not even wait for me to reach the appointed spot. He threw down his hat and walked across the turf.

'Claire!' he said.

'Will?'

And that was all, except that he took me in his arms in the open Forest, though no one was there to see except the larks above our heads, and showered kisses upon me with never a word; and every kiss a holy sacrament of love. When we walked back, hand-in-hand, the sun was set and the twilight was upon us. Then a strange old feeling came upon me. It was as if I was a child again, and once more walked through the Forest in the summer twilight holding Will by the hand, and half afraid. I was half afraid again, yet full of faith and hope and joy. Just as they had done when we were children together, the trees of the Forest threw up tall arches above our heads, and made a great cathedral in which we could lift up our hearts and sing praises; again the black shadows lay on either hand full of possible dragons for my brave boy to slay; again the sweet fragrance of the early summer filled the air and the soft breath of the west wind played upon our cheeks. Again I was a little child going out into the unknown world with Will's strong hand to support me.

'My dear—my dear,' it was the first time Will called me by that sweet and simple name—'The life of which Allen writes so well, the better life, the nobler life; we will teach each other how to lead it.'

'Nay, Will, I shall learn from you.'

When we got home we found that my father had spread a most beautiful supper for us. It was in memory, he said, of the evening three years before, when he bade the three young men wait for three years more. It was a supper just like that memorable feast; all flowers, fruit, vegetables, and little things. I would tell you all about that supper, but, in fact, it was a failure. My father tried to make a speech, but broke down and shed tears, and so did some others. Isabel sat with blushing cheeks, and Allen looked guiltily happy, as if he had climbed into the Garden of Eden over the wall, as indeed he had.

Will is still young and his work lies before him. If you should sometime hear something of him, as of a man who is doing good work and true, I pray you all remember that he learned how to do it of my father.

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